



香港教育大學

The Education University  
of Hong Kong



# CRITICAL UNIVERSITY STUDIES CONFERENCE 2024



**Rage against the machine –  
remaking universities for  
hopeful futures**

**19 – 21 JUNE 2024**

The Education University of Hong Kong  
North Point Study Centre  
19 Cheung Hong Street  
North Point, Hong Kong



**#CUSConf24**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01**

Welcome Message

**05**

Programme Summary

**11**

Parallel Sessions: Schedule

**21**

Keynotes

**27**

Parallel Sessions: Papers, Symposia, Roundtables & Performances

**125**

Parallel Sessions: Parallel Discussion Groups

**128**

About EdUHK, CHELPS & FEHD

**130**

Venue Floor Plan & Community Information



# WELCOME



A very warm welcome to the inaugural Critical University Studies (CUS) Conference being held at the North Point Study Centre of The Education University of Hong Kong. This is a unique conference that brings together more than 120 academics and scholars from around the world demonstrating that critical analysis of the role and functions of universities and higher education systems, and their effects on students, academics, and wider society, represents a matter of global interest.

This booklet provides an easy-to-use guide to the next two and half days in traditional hard copy form. The same information is also available from the CUS conference website (<https://www.cusconf.com>). Abstracts have been categorised by sessions and themes. Wherever possible we have grouped papers together in parallel sessions to maximise the opportunities for sharing between contributors with closely related research and scholarly interests. The rich array of symposia, roundtables, creative performances and papers at this conference cluster around the following themes:

- **academic freedom**
- **academic identity**
- **academic work**
- **decolonisation**
- **doctoral education**
- **higher education and society**
- **higher education futures**
- **internationalisation**
- **leadership and governance**
- **marketisation**
- **neoliberalism**
- **students**
- **women academics**

There are well established themes here, such as neoliberalism, and others which have risen to prominence in more recent years, such as decolonisation. Contributors to this conference are seeking to problematise the role, functions and effects of universities and higher education systems operating in increasingly competitive and marketised environments. The phrase 'critical university studies' was coined by Jeffrey Williams (2012)<sup>1</sup> in an article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* twelve years ago. Williams argued that opposition among academics to the rise of academic capitalism and managerialism in universities since the 1990s had led to a new sub-field which he christened 'critical university studies'. He referred to a body of critical work regarding the corporatisation of the university, the (mis)treatment of academic labour by university management, and the exploitation of students as high fee paying 'customers' especially in market-driven higher education systems.

While Williams was right to identify a rising tide of dystopian views about higher education, represented by books such as Stefan Collini's *What Are Universities For?* (2012), concerns about what we now call neoliberalism stretch back much further than the 1990s, as illustrated by the work of Thorstein Veblen (1918), Abraham Flexner (1930) and others. Those who contribute to a burgeoning literature about critical university studies today are bound together by a common set of beliefs and values:

- holding universities, and related funding and governmental bodies, to account for their fair treatment of students, academics and administrators, and in discharging their wider social and ethical responsibilities;
- challenging the dominant neoliberal discourse about higher education based on the assumptions of marketisation and managerialism; and
- promoting academic values that foreground an alternative set of values including openness, equity, academic freedom, restitution, social responsibility and collective leadership

<sup>1</sup> Williams, J. (2012) Deconstructing Academe, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 24th February, 58(25), pp. B7-B8.

This conference will feature three keynote presentations by Angel Lin, Qinghua Chen and Phoebe Siu on the first day, Liz Morrish on the second day and Sharon Stein on our final day. The keynotes will set out an important agenda for discussion and change focusing on academic work and identity, and the decolonisation of the university (see page x for more details about the keynotes).

One novel feature of this conference is that you will be allocated to a discussion group on the first two days (19th and 20th June). Here, our intention is to maximise the opportunities for dialogue between participants guided by a facilitator. It will also, we hope, promote networking and academic friendship. The opening question for discussion groups on each of these days is as follows:

### **19th June**

**Can critical university studies bring about change in the University?**

**Should we be activists? Why? Why not?**

### **20th June**

**What might a future research agenda for critical university studies include?**

On a lighter note, eating is, of course, important to us all and especially in local culture here in Hong Kong! If you have registered for a 3-day pass, your registration covers all refreshments and lunches as well as the welcome reception (day 1) and buffet dinner (day 2). If you have registered for a 1-day pass all refreshments and meals are included for that day. We are also delighted to let you know that we have arranged some live musical entertainment to accompany our buffet dinner on day 2.

If you have any questions or queries whilst at the conference, look for anyone wearing a CUS T-shirt or a small, gold badge with the acronym 'CHELPS' on it. This stands for the Centre for Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies at The Education University of Hong Kong. It is the first, and only, higher education centre in Hong Kong and fellows of the Centre attending the conference will be delighted to help you. We hope that you have an intellectually stimulating and thoroughly enjoyable conference.



**The CUS Conference committee**

James Burford  
Barbara Grant  
Bruce Macfarlane  
Trevor Holmes  
Tai Peseta  
Jan Smith  
Eva Bendix Petersen  
Linlin Xu

**The Education University of Hong Kong  
organising committee**

Kit Cheng  
Fang Gao  
Ivy Xiao Han  
Yabing Liu  
Bruce Macfarlane  
Ngoc Ninh Nguyen  
Anatoly Oleksiyenko  
Suyan Pan  
Khanh Hoa Tang  
Min Thein Win  
Weiyang Xiong  
Celia Yee  
Zhenzhou Zhao



# PROGRAMME SUMMARY

## DAY 1

Wednesday 19th June

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
9.00-9.30	<b>Conference registration</b> Multi-purpose room (G/F)	
	<b>Welcome for early career researchers</b> Lecture theatre (G/F)	<b>James Burford</b> University of Warwick
9.30-9.45	<b>Conference opening and welcome</b>	<b>Bruce Macfarlane</b> The Education University of Hong Kong
	<b>Welcome address</b> Lecture theatre (G/F)	<b>Professor John Lee</b> The Education University of Hong Kong
9.45-10.00	<b>...And so what is 'Critical University Studies'?</b> Lecture theatre (G/F)	<b>Eva Bendix Petersen</b> Roskilde University
10.00-11.00	<b><u>Keynote</u></b> <b>Self-care amidst neoliberal pressures in academia: diverse voices</b> Lecture theatre (G/F)	<b><u>Keynote</u></b> <b>Angel Lin</b> The Education University of Hong Kong <b>Qinghua Chen</b> The Education University of Hong Kong <b>Phoebe Siu</b> Hong Kong Polytechnic University <b><u>Chair</u></b> <b>James Burford</b> University of Warwick
11.00-11.30	<b>Coffee break</b> Multi-purpose room (G/F)	



# PROGRAMME SUMMARY

## DAY 1 (cont'd) Wednesday 19th June

TIME	SESSION
11.30-13.00	<b>Parallel session 1</b> Session 1A: Classroom NP-103 (1/F) Session 1B: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 1C: Lecture theatre (G/F) Session 1D: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 1E: Classroom NP-304 (3/F)
13.00-14.00	<b>Lunch</b> Learning commons (4/F)
14.00-16.00	<b>Parallel session 2</b> Session 2A: Classroom NP-103 (1/F) Session 2B: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 2C: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 2D: Classroom NP-304 (3/F) Session 2E: Lecture theatre (G/F)
16.00-16.30	<b>Tea break</b> Learning commons (4/F)
16.30-17.30	<b>Parallel session 3</b> Session 3A: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 3B: Lecture theatre (G/F) Session 3C: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 3D: Classroom NP-304 (3/F)
17.30-18.15	<b>Parallel discussion groups</b> <i>Group A:</i> Lecture theatre (G/F) <i>Group B:</i> Classroom NP-103 (1/F) <i>Group C:</i> Classroom NP-202 (2/F) <i>Group D:</i> Classroom NP-302 (3/F) <i>Group E:</i> Classroom NP-303 (3/F) <i>Group F:</i> Classroom NP-304 (3/F) <i>Group G:</i> Multi-purpose Room (G/F)
18.30-20.00	<b>Welcome reception</b> Learning commons (4/F)



# DAY 2

Thursday 20th June

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
8.45-9.15	<b>Conference registration</b> Multi-purpose room (G/F)	
9.15-10.15	<b><u>Keynote</u></b> <b>Academic identities: from tenured autonomy to indentured servitude</b> Lecture theatre (G/F)	<b><u>Keynote</u></b> <b>Liz Morrish</b> Independent scholar  <b><u>Chair</u></b> <b>Tai Peseta</b> Western Sydney University
10.30-12.30	<b>Parallel session 4</b> Session 4A: Classroom NP-103 (1/F) Session 4B: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 4C: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 4D: Classroom NP-304 (3/F) Session 4E: Lecture theatre (G/F)	
12.30-13.30	<b>Lunch</b> Learning commons (4/F)	
13.30-15.00	<b>Parallel session 5</b> Session 5A: Lecture theatre (G/F) Session 5B: Classroom NP-103 (1/F) Session 5C: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 5D: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 5E: Classroom NP-304 (3/F)	
15.00-15.30	<b>Tea break</b> Learning commons (4/F)	



# PROGRAMME SUMMARY

## DAY 2 (cont'd) Thursday 20th June

TIME	SESSION
15.30-17.30	<b>Parallel session 6</b> Session 6A: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 6B: Lecture theatre (G/F) Session 6C: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 6D: Classroom NP-304 (3/F) Session 6E: Classroom NP-103 (1/F)
17.45-18.30	<b>Parallel discussion groups</b> <i>Group A:</i> Lecture theatre (G/F) <i>Group B:</i> Classroom NP-103 (1/F) <i>Group C:</i> Classroom NP-202 (2/F) <i>Group D:</i> Classroom NP-302 (3/F) <i>Group E:</i> Classroom NP-303 (3/F) <i>Group F:</i> Classroom NP-304 (3/F) <i>Group G:</i> Multi-purpose Room (G/F)
8 18.30-19.00	<b>Launch of the Centre for Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies (CHELPS) at EdUHK</b> Learning commons (4/F)
19.00-21.00	<b>Buffet dinner and musical entertainment</b> Learning commons (4/F)

# DAY 3

Friday 21st June

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
8.45-9.00	<b>Conference registration</b> Multi-purpose room (G/F)	
9.00-10.00	<b><u>Keynote</u></b> <b>Redressing harm and repurposing the university</b> Lecture theatre (G/F)	<b><u>Keynote</u></b> <b>Sharon Stein</b> University of British Columbia <b><u>Chair</u></b> <b>Eva Bendix Petersen</b> Roskilde University
10.00-10.30	<b>Coffee break</b> Multi-purpose room (G/F)	
10.30-12.00	<b>Parallel session 7</b> Session 7A: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 7B: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 7C: Lecture theatre (G/F) Session 7D: Classroom NP-304 (3/F)	
12.15-13.15	<b>Parallel session 8</b> Session 8A: Classroom NP-302 (3/F) Session 8B: Classroom NP-303 (3/F) Session 8C: Lecture theatre (G/F)	
13.15-14.00	<b>Lunch</b> Learning commons (4/F)	



# PROGRAMME SUMMARY

## DAY 3 (cont'd) Friday 21st June

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
14.00-14.45	<b>Panel discussion: Hopeful futures?</b> Lecture theatre (G/F)	<p><u>Panel</u></p> <p><b>Barbara Grant</b> University of Auckland</p> <p><b>Angela Yung Chi Hou</b> National Chengchi University</p> <p><b>Jung Cheol Shin</b> Seoul National University</p> <p><u>Chair</u></p> <p><b>Bruce Macfarlane</b> The Education University of Hong Kong</p>
14.45-15.00	<b>Conference close and depart</b>	

PARALLEL SESSIONS

# SCHEDULE



# PARALLEL SESSION SCHEDULE

- ▶ All parallel sessions will be chaired by the presenter(s) of the final scheduled presentation.
- ▶ Paper presenters should present for no more than 20 minutes, allowing 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

## Parallel session 1 Wednesday 19th June, 11.30-13.00

Session 1A		Neoliberalism
Classroom NP-103 (1/F)		<b>Paper 13:</b> Stakeholders: The political-economy of the flexible university (Jonah Henkle)
		<b>Paper 53:</b> Listening for the silences: Exploring academic voice, agency, and activism in higher education (Melinda J Lewis & Rosanne Quinnell)
		<b>Paper 65:</b> Community building as academic activism: Creating spaces for resistance and reimagination (Ai Tam Le & Melina Aarnikoivu)
Session 1B		Marketisation
12 Classroom NP-302 (3/F)		<b>Paper 30:</b> Choosing universities in the global hierarchy: College ranking and decision making of study abroad (Xueting Liu, Wenqin Shen & Yilin Chai)
		<b>Paper 46:</b> Influence of job insecurity on online personal branding intentions among early career academics: Evidence from Brazil, China, and Germany (Regina Bedersdorfer, Huan Li, Chi Wui Ng & Raquel Tusi Tamiosso)
		<b>Paper 66:</b> Navigating transformations in doctoral education: From self-perception to professional aspirations (Alexandre Bran & Matthieu Lafon)
Session 1C		Academic identity
Lecture theatre (G/F)		<b>Symposium 3:</b> Stepping off the machine: Challenging negative perceptions of education-focused academic contracts (Machi Sato, Karin Watson, Collins Fleischner, Ricci Fong, Bruce Macfarlane)
Session 1D		Students
Classroom NP-303 (3/F)		<b>Paper 1:</b> Avoiding the "rat race": Hong Kong students' sense of belonging to a Chinese university in the Greater Bay Area (Fang Gao)
		<b>Paper 23:</b> Desiring transnational higher education: Chinese queer international students and their narratives of educational mobility (Haoxi Ou)
		<b>Paper 52:</b> Navigating the digital learning habitus through WeChat: A study of international students in China (Xiaoyuan Li & Kun Dai)

Session 1E	Doctoral education (11.30-12.30)
<b>Classroom</b> <b>NP-304</b> <b>(3/F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 8:</b> The examination of the PhD thesis by publication in a South African Medical School (Colleen Aldous &amp; Elly Grossman)</li> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 16:</b> Querying the on/off campus binary: Re-conceptualising distance doctoral study (James Burford, Katrina McChesney &amp; Liezel Frick)</li> </ul>

## Parallel session 2 Wednesday 19th June, 14.00-16.00

Session 2A	Women academics (14.00-15.30)
<b>Classroom</b> <b>NP-103</b> <b>(1/F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: #800080;">■</span> <b>Performance 2:</b> Laugh (like a Medusa) at the machine: Hélène Cixous and laughter as critical resistance in the academy (Kirsten Locke &amp; Katrina McChesney)</li> <li><span style="color: #FF8C00;">■</span> <b>Roundtable 3:</b> A mumifesto for higher education (Sandra Clare)</li> </ul>

Session 2B	Decolonisation
<b>Classroom</b> <b>NP-302</b> <b>(3/F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 5:</b> Implementing English-medium instruction in Vietnamese higher education: Causing harm while doing good? (Hoà Tăng &amp; Khanh Nguyen)</li> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 14:</b> Decolonial relationality in higher education: Building partnerships in resistance to coloniality (Jennifer Fraser, Fatima Maatwk &amp; Kyra Araneta)</li> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 40:</b> Co-creating critical consciousness: Disrupting the university with affect and mattering (Amy Maclatchy &amp; Moonisah Usman)</li> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 42:</b> What is it to indigenise the university? (Sean Sturm)</li> </ul>

13

Session 2C	Leadership & governance (14.00-15.30)
<b>Classroom</b> <b>NP-303</b> <b>(3/F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 11:</b> Shifting paradigms in higher education: Institutional responses to state-level policies on internationalisation pre- and post-pandemic (Zou Tao &amp; Tatiana Fumasoli)</li> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 22:</b> Troubling the façade of diversity: Re-viewing leaders and leadership in elite universities (Tanya Fitzgerald &amp; Sarah Jane Aiston)</li> <li><span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 75:</b> Creating conditions for middle leadership development in hierarchical contexts: The role of institutional leaders (Ni Zhang)</li> </ul>





# PARALLEL SESSION SCHEDULE

## Parallel session 2 Wednesday 19th June, 14.00-16.00

Session 2D	Students
<b>Classroom NP-304 (3/F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Paper 34:</b> Paradoxes in the making of an education hub: Policy rationales and students' experiences (Pan Suyan)</li><li><b>Paper 20:</b> Looking for signs of life in university archives: Researching the inorganic agency of a 1968 student union (Frances Kelly)</li><li><b>Paper 29:</b> In search of meaning and purpose in the transition from university to the world of work (Xiaoshi Li)</li><li><b>Paper 44:</b> Residential halls in the Hong Kong higher education – a changing attitude? (Michelle W.T. Cheng)</li></ul>

Session 2E	Doctoral education
<b>14 Lecture theatre (G/F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Paper 4:</b> Perceived academic working conditions and career choices of Chinese PhD students (Huan Li &amp; Hugo Horta)</li><li><b>Paper 33:</b> Beyond publish or perish: Exploring the diverse publication pursuits of Chinese and American math doctorates (Tsz Sum Chan &amp; Mingrui Zhou)</li><li><b>Paper 43:</b> PhD holders working beyond academia looking back to their PhD training (Marina García Morante, Crista Weise, Laura Díaz &amp; Montserrat Castelló)</li><li><b>Paper 69:</b> Pursuing doctoral study in alternative destinations: An exploration of Chinese students in Southeast Asia (Yueyang Zheng, Xiaoyuan Li &amp; Kun Dai)</li></ul>

## Parallel session 3 Wednesday 19th June, 16.30-17.30

Session 3A	Academic freedom
<b>Classroom NP-302 (3/F)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Paper 17:</b> The duty to explain: a positive defence of academic freedom in the social sciences (Bruce Macfarlane &amp; Ivy Xiao Han)</li><li><b>Paper 19:</b> Academic freedom in an era of marketisation (Christine Muhonja Olando)</li></ul>

### Session 3B

### Women academics

**Lecture theatre (G/F)**

- **Paper 3:** Examining perspectives on supporting female academic's careers: Insights from male and female academics at a Chinese Research University (Li Tang & Hugo Horta)
- **Paper 18:** Democratising Indian higher education: Narratives of women academics (Gauri Khanna)

### Session 3C

### Academic work

**Classroom NP-303 (3/F)**

- **Performance 1:** Who needs critical university studies? Affective practices in research-based interventions in policy enactments (Eva Bendix Petersen)
- **Paper 49:** Why do social scientists publish? A critical review of motivations and driving forces (Yusuf I. Oldac & Victoria Ankrah)

### Session 3D

### Students

**Classroom NP-304 (3/F)**

- **Roundtable 7:** Universities as liminal spaces for transformative student engagement (Jack Tsao & Sakinah Alhadad)

15

## Parallel session 4 Thursday 20th June, 10.30-12.30

### Session 4A

### Academic identity

**Classroom NP-103 (1/F)**

- **Paper 15:** Navigating the neoliberal academia: An autoethnographic exploration (Ridita Mizan)
- **Paper 31:** Playing the academic game: Resistance, precarity, and university futures (Bethany Cox)
- **Paper 51:** Acquiring traditional Chinese knowledge: Generational experiences of Chinese humanities and social sciences scholars amid global knowledge asymmetries (Yuting Shen)
- **Paper 64:** 'Playing the same game differently': Constituting academic identities in four disciplines (Mark Barrow & Linlin Xu)



# PARALLEL SESSION SCHEDULE

## Parallel session 4 Thursday 20th June, 10.30-12.30

### Session 4B

### Internationalisation

**Classroom  
NP-302  
(3/F)**

- Paper 24:** "Where am I?": The Chinese multi-campus university as a deconstruction of students' sense of belonging (Yang Huaxin)
- Paper 47:** The rising influence of international organisations on doctorate governance: Towards a marketisation of doctoral education (Alexandre Bran & Matthieu Lafon)
- Paper 50:** Students' experience in intra-country cross-border education: Identity formation in a Hong Kong institution's branch campus (Xiaofan Zhang & Kun Dai)
- Paper 55:** Resilience and resourcefulness: Logics of access and survival in transnational medical education for less affluent international students (Tingting Zhang & Yabing Liu)

16

### Session 4C

### Leadership & governance (10.30-12.00)

**Classroom  
NP-303  
(3/F)**

- Paper 56:** Who's at the wheel?: A case study of university entrance examination reform in Japan (Mariko Ono)
- Paper 59:** Decoding the 'problem' in Taiwan's SoTL policy: A poststructural exploration (Hung-Chang Chen)
- Paper 62:** Unveiling conflict in Syrian higher education – academics' perspectives and informal management processes (Fatima Alhaj Hasan)

### Session 4D

### Academic work

**Classroom  
NP-304  
(3/F)**

- Paper 10:** The university's missing: Grief, loss and mourning in the UK university (Felicity Callard)
- Paper 12:** Academic health and wellbeing in Taiwanese universities: A job demands-resources perspective (Sheng-Ju Chan)
- Paper 26:** The inadequate subject and the illiberal university (Julian Castano Gallego)
- Paper 28:** Care and community in the academy: The role of retreats (Kathryn Sutherland, Kate Schick & Rhian Salmon)

**Session 4E Leadership & governance (10.30-12.00)**

**Lecture theatre (G/F)**

- **Symposium 1:** The role of bibliometrics in academic reward and recognition systems in East Asian universities: Critical perspectives (Futao Huang, Gerard A. Postiglione, Jisun Jung, Angela Yung Chi Hou, J.C. Shin, Bruce Macfarlane)

## Parallel session 5 Thursday 20th June, 13.30-15.00

**Session 5A Neoliberalism**

**Lecture theatre (G/F)**

- **Symposium 5:** The meso-level as collective scholarship: Undoing the neoliberal logic of the university (Tai Peseta, Jeannette Fyffe, Tracy Fortune & John Hannon)

**Session 5B Leadership & governance**

**Classroom NP-103 (1/F)**

- **Symposium 2:** Intellectual leaders and axiological dilemmas: Harbingers or hostages of crises? (Bruce Macfarlane, Hugo Horta, Jisun Jung & Anatoly V. Oleksiyenko)

17

**Session 5C Marketisation**

**Classroom NP-302 (3/F)**

- **Symposium 4:** A critical examination of employment policies, cultural nationalism, and marketisation in Chinese higher education (Han Xiao Ivy, Lin Cong Jason & Xiong Weiyan)

**Session 5D Academic work**

**Classroom NP-303 (3/F)**

- **Roundtable 4:** Evaluating and critically re-thinking hybrid and remote work in higher education: Lessons learned after COVID-19 (Roy Y. Chan)
- **Paper 67:** Is "good enough" enough? The problems of asking for academic excellence at a high-status university with an aversion to change (Susan Rowland)

**Session 5E Doctoral education (13.30-14.30)**

**Classroom NP-304 (3/F)**

- **Paper 58:** Decoding a decade: A bibliometric analysis on the global research trajectory of international doctoral students (Yabing Liu & Tingting Zhang)
- **Paper 61:** International female doctoral researchers' perspective of the purpose of doctoral education within the context of globalisation (Daixuan Xie)



# PARALLEL SESSION SCHEDULE

## Parallel session 6 Thursday 20th June, 15.30-17.30

### Session 6A

#### Academic work

**Classroom  
NP-302  
(3/F)**

- Roundtable 2:** The future of academic journals – time for a big rethink?  
(Cally Guerin, Jisun Jung & Hugo Horta)
- Roundtable 5:** The 'idea of the university reading group' as an activist generator:  
When concepts crack practices  
(Jeanette Fyffe, John Hannon, Tai Peseta & Fiona Salisbury)

### Session 6B

#### Students

**Lecture  
theatre  
(G/F)**

- Paper 54:** Students' perceived purposes of higher education: A comparative analysis between Chinese liberal arts students at Chinese vs. U.S. universities (Mianmian Fei)
- Paper 57:** Navigating 'in-between': Chinese international students' stressors and acculturation in Africa (Yuxiao Jiang & Kun Dai)
- Paper 70:** Shaping of interdisciplinary academic learner identity among undergraduate students through interdisciplinary general education (Lam Man Ho Adrian)
- Paper 73:** A study of student's lived experiences in the transition from secondary school to higher education (Kohei Okada)

### Session 6C

#### Higher education and society

**Classroom  
NP-303  
(3/F)**

- Paper 7:** Understanding education studies from the lens of Carsun Chang 's philosophy of education (Yuting Jia)
- Paper 36:** Revisiting religious higher education in China: Comparative analysis of Furen University narratives (Zhenzhou Zhao)
- Paper 37:** The expansion of corporate-sponsored tuition benefits to America's low-wage workers (Federick Ngo)
- Paper 41:** Identity, community and engagement: A critical examination of the relationship between higher education and the professions (Paul Campbell)

### Session 6D

#### Academic identity

**Classroom  
NP-304  
(3/F)**

- Paper 68:** Reconsidering the nature of learning how to be an academic as situated in Japanese *Kenkyūshitsu* (Mako Kawano)

Session 6D <b>Academic identity</b>	
Classroom NP-304 (3/F)	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 72:</b> Remaining true to research as a reflective practice and a sense of self (Juliet Aleta Villanueva & Douglas Eacersall)
	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 74:</b> The promise and peril of interdisciplinarity: Academic identity and engagement in interdisciplinary practice (Karri A. Holley)
	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 76:</b> Centring back the intrinsic contribution of higher education: student self-formation through disciplinary knowledge (Soyoung Lee)
Session 6E <b>Leadership &amp; governance</b> (15.30-16.00)	
Classroom NP-103 (1/F)	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 38:</b> The role of the Chinese Communist Party in sino-foreign cooperative universities: Governance and influence (Tatiana Fumasoli & Xu Liu)

## Parallel session 7 Friday 21st June, 10.30-12.00

Session 7A <b>Doctoral education</b>		19
Classroom NP-302 (3/F)	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 2:</b> Influence of social class on educational aims of PhD students in Hong Kong (Chi Wui Ng)	
	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 21:</b> Encountering each other: on the 'inconvenience' of university staff and prospective doctoral applicants (James Burford & Emily F. Henderson)	
	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 35:</b> What research gets funded? Examining funding practices in doctoral education (Kelsey Inouye, Éireann Attridge & James Robson)	
Session 7B <b>Academic work</b>		
Classroom NP-303 (3/F)	<span style="color: #FF8C00;">■</span> <b>Roundtable 6:</b> The collective individual: Understanding ourselves and our work differently using social theory (Amani Bell, Suzanne Egan & Remy Y.S. Low)	
	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 32:</b> Remaking professional learning in universities: Learning lessons from atypical contexts (Gina Saliba & Tai Peseta)	
Session 7C <b>Higher education futures</b>		
Lecture theatre (G/F)	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 6:</b> Creating spaces for the ecologies of knowledges: Remaking universities for hopeful futures (Catherine Manathunga)	
	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> <b>Paper 45:</b> An international study of higher education funding: Understanding radical alternatives for a hopeful future? (Richard Watermeyer, Lisa Lucas & Rodolfo Benites Nieves)	



# PARALLEL SESSION SCHEDULE

## Session 7C

### Higher education futures

Lecture  
theatre  
(G/F)

- Paper 60: Care-full futures? Disrupting carefree academic norms and remaking academic cultures (Marie-Pierre Moreau)

## Session 7D

### Leadership & governance

Classroom  
NP-304  
(3/F)

- Paper 9: Transnational partnerships in higher education: Implication for governance and management (Huili Si & Robin Carey)
- Paper 71: Evolving in practice or public image? The dilemma of university engagement in China's Greater Bay Area (Taixing Shen & Tatiana Fumasoli)
- Paper 39: Gender equality for university hopeful future: Higher education leadership agency in mainstreaming gender equality in universities of Kazakhstan (Zumrad Kataeva, Naureen Durrani, Aray Rakhimzhanova & Svetlana Shakirova)

20

## Parallel session 8 Friday 21st June, 12.15-13.15

### Session 8A

#### Academic work

Classroom  
NP-302  
(3/F)

- Performance 3: A devil's dictionary of academic life (Bruce Macfarlane & Sussi Smith)
- Performance 4: Fostering a sense of belonging for higher education staff and students with caring responsibilities: A research - and - art-based collaboration (Marie-Pierre Moreau)

### Session 8B

#### Students

Classroom  
NP-303  
(3/F)

- Roundtable 1: Reconstituting the 'object' of student-staff partnership to be 'the university': Puzzles, provocations, and possibility spaces (Tai Peseta, Lilly-Rose Saliba, Samuel Suresh & Shivani Suresh)

### Session 8C

#### Women academics

Lecture  
theatre  
(G/F)

- Paper 25: A messy office, a door to close, a lovely rug: Academic women in place (Barbara M. Grant)
- Paper 27: 'I spend lots of time on my appearance': Unpacking Chinese academic women's gendered subjectivities through the lens of bodily performance (Boya Yuan)



# KEYNOTES



## **KEYNOTE 1**

# **SELF-CARE AMIDST NEOLIBERAL PRESSURES IN ACADEMIA: DIVERSE VOICES**

### **Abstract**

This keynote intertwines the perspectives of an early career researcher (Qinghua), an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecturer (Phoebe), and a seasoned academic (Angel). Each one is making their unique journey through the neoliberal landscape of the contemporary university. Collectively, we emphasise the importance of self-care strategies in the face of escalating neoliberal pressures. We advocate for maintaining a genuine interest in research, seeking the societal relevance of our work, and fostering supportive academic networks. We highlight the challenge of resisting the co-opting influence of neoliberalism while nurturing hope for change, and share our survival strategies in a self-care affirming space. We unite in our call for a critical appraisal of the impact of neoliberalism on higher education and those within it, with a goal to sustain both individual and collective well-being. This keynote seeks to ignite a renewed focus on hopeful transformations in the face of the global neoliberalist incursion into higher education.

#### **Angel Lin**

The Education University of Hong Kong

#### **Qinghua Chen**

The Education University of Hong Kong

#### **Phoebe Siu**

Hong Kong Polytechnic University



## Biographies

Angel Lin is Chair Professor in the Department of English Language Education at The Education University of Hong Kong. She serves on the editorial boards of international research journals including *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *Language Policy*, *Language and Education*, *Language, Culture and Curriculum*. Her research and development of the Multimodalities-Entextualisation Cycle (MEC) serves as a critical pragmatic heuristic for educators and researchers to navigate and disrupt the often monoglossic institutional spaces by both valuing and enabling translingual, multimodal, and multisensory meaning making actions with implications for equity, diversity and inclusion in education.

Qinghua Chen is a postdoctoral fellow at the English Language Education Department of The Education University of Hong Kong. His current research interests include subjectivity, emotions, and identity of pre-service teachers and English language learners. He is particularly interested in exploring how these factors shape teaching and learning experiences in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

Phoebe Siu is a lecturer at College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Siu is a doctoral candidate (English Language Education) at The University of Hong Kong. Her doctoral thesis investigates the potentials and challenges in promoting a heteroglossic approach to content and language integrated learning (CLIL) for Public Relations Writing in EMI higher education.



## KEYNOTE 2

# ACADEMIC IDENTITIES: FROM TENURED AUTONOMY TO INDENTURED SERVITUDE

### **Abstract**

This keynote will look at the evolving identities imposed on academics and embodied by some, but considered aberrant and discomfiting by many academics who have striven to critique and resist them. Taking the last 40 years in the UK, I will trace a number of different framings of the ideal academic which have been imposed by politicians in order to try and change academic cultures. The drivers of these changes have been ideological, economic and legislative. This paper will discuss how these have emerged from the political and economic context. I start in the early 1980s with the Thatcherite revolution which led the way for the neoliberal reforms in the next decades. I will identify successive interventions seeking to mould:

- The efficient academic
- The entrepreneurial academic
- The panoptical academic
- The metricised academic
- The managed academic
- The casualised academic
- The unfree academic

In what ways can these identities be performed, subverted or refused? What is the point of universities and academic careers if we no longer have the autonomy to define our own academic identities? Can the arts and humanities survive in a context where the very notion of criticality is being designed out of the academy?

## Biography

Liz Morrish is an independent scholar. She is also an honorary Visiting Fellow at York St John University, UK. For over 30 years she taught linguistics at Nottingham Trent University, UK. Since leaving academia, Liz has found it easier to reclaim academic freedom and she continues to research and write in the areas of higher education policy and Critical University Studies. Her most recent book, co-authored with Helen Sauntson, is *Academic Irregularities: Language and Neoliberalism in Higher Education* published by Routledge in 2020. In 2019, Liz wrote Pressure Vessels, a paper for the UK think tank, the Higher Education Policy Institute, on the epidemic of poor mental health among university staff: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2019/05/23/pressure-vessels-the-epidemic-of-poor-mental-health-among-higher-education-staff/>

Liz writes a blog:  
Academic Irregularities  
<https://academicirregularities.wordpress.com>





### KEYNOTE 3

# REDRESSING HARM AND REPURPOSING THE UNIVERSITY

## Abstract

Over the past decade, students and social movements around the world have called on institutions of higher education to reckon with their historical and ongoing role in the reproduction of social and ecological violence. This lecture asks how universities, and those of us who work and study within them, might ethically respond to these calls by confronting our individual and collective complicity in systems premised on coloniality and unsustainability. In particular, it invites engagement with the challenges, complexities, and possibilities of enacting material and relational repair in ways that could both redress harm and repurpose our institutions to be more relevant and responsible in the context of the current polycrisis.

## Biography

Sharon Stein is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. As a white settler scholar, her work is focused on developing practices of self-reflexive critical inquiry that support people to unlearn colonial habits of knowing and being, and learn to cultivate deeper forms of relational maturity and intergenerational accountability. She is the author of *Unsettling the University: Confronting the Colonial Foundations of US Higher Education*, as well as the founder of the Critical Internationalisation Studies Network, and a founding member of the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective and the Critically Engaged Climate Education Hub.

**Sharon Stein**

University of British Columbia

PARALLEL SESSIONS

# PAPERS, SYMPOSIA ROUNDTABLES & PERFORMANCES



## Paper 13: Stakeholders: The political-economy of the flexible university

**Jonah Henkle, New York University, USA**

Analysing the political-economy of the university through a Marxian critique of its organisation and structure, this paper aims to delineate the various stakeholders within the university (students, faculty, and administration) and their political and economic relations to each other and the institution. Drawing on structuralist Marxism and insights from critical university studies (CUS), this article argues the university is a site of class struggle between academic labor and the administrative apparatus. As such we strive to not only critique the economic relations of the university but provide a discourse analysis of the managerial rationality that structures its internal logic. Using theories of flexible accumulation outlined in Harvey (1990), this article further situates the stakeholders of the university into the flexible firm model (Curson, 1986). This “flexible university” model further theorises the stakeholders in terms of the precarity of labor conditions and the broader division of labor endemic to the new neoliberal university. Following this analysis, the flexible university critique culminates in a call for the abolition of the administrative apparatus and new forms of labor organisation and solidarities between students, faculty, and contingent labor in the university.

### Reference

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## Paper 53: Listening for the silences: Exploring academic voice, agency, and activism in higher education

**Melinda J Lewis, University of Technology Sydney, Australia**  
**Rosanne Quinnell, The University of Sydney, Australia**

Higher Education academies are noisy. While some members take considerable bandwidth, many are silenced and excluded. Not being invited to the table is an act of deliberative silencing. Listening for the silences, and moments of exclusions in the academy reveals how silence is weaponised. Speaking ‘up’, speaking ‘out’ or speaking ‘back’ (from Feminist approaches) can be risky. Irrespective of what sits behind how people are selected to be heard, and there are a multitude of reasons, a clear tension in speaking/not speaking, or remaining silent/breaking silence impacts our individual practices in an accelerated academy. As a deliberative practice, Russo (2013) suggests a method for exploring and appreciating the moments between speech acts and silences while Farmer (2001) describes the persuasive effects of sudden silence which may be understood as a strategic act for dramatic purposes. There are calls for the academy to transform through programs and curricula embracing social justice, and safer ways to engage in organisational processes to build capacity for scholarly agency for all individuals. We revisit and critically discuss emergent politics of social justice pedagogies and disjuncture (Stauber, 2017) in the context of the neoliberal disrupted academy. Through the contradictory politics of voice, listening and

silences in the academy (Luke, 1994) we explore respectful, non-judgmental listening and dialogic methods in teaching which allows an individual or group to take their time to work things out. Amplification of scholarly agency through critical listening has the power to positively transform teaching and research practices. Proceeding with care and acknowledging the vulnerability of those participating in discussions about their own agency is critical, particularly for those who have been routinely marginalised. Collectively, our reflexive positioning from lived experiences contribute to identifying the significance of listening and appreciating silence as a genre within the academic community. This paper offers a contemplative and 'quiet corner' in the conference, a space where people can gather and find nourishment against the 'rage' by participating in gentle and reflective discourses. Together, we invite participants to reflect on times when 'sacred silence' (Hill, 2018) was evoked, and reimagine the consequences for critical university studies.

### Reference

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## Paper 65: Community building as academic activism: Creating spaces for resistance and reimagination

**Ai Tam Le, Deakin University, Australia**

**Melina Aarnikoivu, University of Groningen, The Netherlands**

It is not uncommon to characterise parts of academia and universities as "finite games" (Harré et al., 2017) of hyper-competition, pressures, and uncertainties. How people cope in this environment differs: some are happily playing the games; others are openly critiquing these games (as we are doing in this conference); while the rest are quietly and consistently taking part with varying degrees of resistance (Anderson, 2008). When systematic change seems to be an uphill battle, what if we can create spaces – even small and informal – to garner the resistance energy where individuals can find a sense of community to anchor and inspire them? This paper contributes to the conference and the critical university studies literature not only from a critique but also an activist stance. We explore how taking a community-building approach in academia can be an act of care, resistance, and reimagination at the same time. By drawing on some examples from a recent edited book project about building communities in academia (Aarnikoivu & Le, forthcoming), we will demonstrate the potential of community building from the "grassroots" level to work toward the universities and academia we aspire to have. Specifically, communities and community building enable the resisting of individualism propelled by neoliberalism; the care for individuals by allowing a sense of social connections and belonging; and the reflection and imagination needed to strive for a better academia.

We approach community building as a STAR (Slow Tiny Acts of Resistance), proposed by Harré et al. (2017), where one can "find room for small creative acts of activist subversion alongside those larger, more public and emphatic but more difficult to arrange, acts of defiance" (p. 12). We argue that communities, including informal ones, provide spaces that enable the collective reckoning to see through the cracks of neoliberal academia (Bottrell & Manathunga, 2019). In doing so, we propose that community building can be a form of

academic activism that aims to “rewrite the rules” of the academic games for the better (Harré et al., 2017).

### Reference

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## Paper 30: Choosing universities in the global hierarchy: college ranking and decision making of study abroad

**Xueting Liu, Peking University, China**

**Wenqin Shen, Peking University, China**

**Yilin Chai, Peking University, China**

International students' choice of study abroad destinations and their decision-making mechanisms have garnered lots of attentions (Beech, 2015; Yang, 2015). However, the role played by university rankings and reputation in students' decision-making processes has yet to receive systematic analysis (Brooks & Waters, 2009). This paper explores how undergraduates evaluate university reputation and ranking when choosing universities to study abroad. From 2020 to 2023, we interviewed more than 200 undergraduates at China's elite universities. We find that students form assessments of the university's global hierarchy through a synthesis of factors such as ranking information published by university ranking agencies, university reputation in the study abroad market, and employers' use of university ranking in the job market. Based on this comprehensive evaluation, students make their decisions of where to study abroad. The primary influencing factor in students' choice of institutions is the attainment of institutional mobility by enrolling in higher-ranked universities, rather than obtaining high-quality educational services and experiences. The research reveals that students from different types of universities, various academic disciplines, and with different academic or employment orientations exhibit significant variations in their sensitivity and preferences for university rankings in their study abroad decision-making processes. We conclude this paper with a critical reflection on the impact of university rankings. We argue that the use of university rankings in the study abroad has had some negative effects. We argue that the use of rankings by employers such as universities and students' deference to rankings exacerbates stratification and inequality among universities. We make a new contribution to critical university studies by analysing how university rankings as one of the tools of neoliberalism affect students' study abroad decisions.

### Reference

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**Paper 46: Influence of job insecurity on online personal branding intentions among early career academics: Evidence from Brazil, China, and Germany**

**Regina Bedersdorfer, Heidelberg University of Education, Germany**

**Huan Li, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Chi Wui Ng, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Raquel Tusi Tamiosso, UFN Universidade Franciscana, Brazil**

This study investigates the influences of job insecurity on the intentions of early career academics to build an online researcher profile. In response to a growing demand for transformative research and open science, academics are now expected to make a strong social impact with their research, which can be achieved through online personal branding (OPB), typically on academic social networking sites (ASNSs). However, most academics are not actively engaged in OPB, with early career academics demonstrating higher levels of involvement in comparison to their older counterparts (Ali & Richardson, 2018). Previous research tends to attribute this difference to younger academics' familiarity with online social networks (Mason, 2020) but has overlooked job insecurity as a possible explanatory mechanism. To address this research gap, this study examines the influences of job security on early career academics' OPB intentions. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, we believe that attitudes towards OPB mediate the relationship between job insecurity and intentions to engage in OPB. To test our assumptions, we will collect data from early career academics in Brazil, China, and Germany ( $N \approx 1,000$ ), which represent countries with distinct academic cultures and degrees of academic autonomy, followed by structural equation modelling analysis. Overall, this study illuminates early career academics' motivation to engage in OPB in an academic labour market where casualisation has become increasingly prevalent. We believe that measures can be proposed to support early career academics' engagement in OPB in a way that aligns with both their personal wellbeing and the growing public expectation on higher education practitioners' fulfilment of their social responsibility.

**Reference**

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- Mason, S. (2020). Adoption and usage of Academic Social Networks: a Japan case study. *Scientometrics*, 122(3), 1751-1767.

## Paper 66: Navigating transformations in doctoral education: from self-perception to professional aspirations

**Alexandre Bran, Adoc Talent Management, France**

**Matthieu Lafon, Adoc Talent Management, France**

Doctoral education in Europe is undergoing a shift, with PhD holders increasingly opting for non-academic roles, partly due to the scarcity of academic positions. This trend has led doctoral programs to focus more on enhancing transversal skill training, such as communication, ethics, and project management, to better prepare PhD candidates for more diverse professional paths. Institutional narratives are also evolving, now portraying PhD holders as highly skilled professionals capable of understanding and handling various complex situations. PhD holders, once described as aspirant researchers, are now considered valuable assets for the knowledge economy (Auriol et al., 2010; European Commission, 2021). However, few studies have investigated these changes from the perspective of PhD holders themselves. Studies show that PhD candidates are still targeting jobs in the academic sector despite the increasing difficulty in accessing these positions (e.g., Young et al., 2019). A notable issue is the challenge many PhD holders report facing in recognising their value in non-academic job markets and the skills they have developed (Hnatkova et al., 2022). This situation suggests a possible disconnect between the narratives about PhD holders and their own perceptions and motivations. Our research aims to understand how recent changes in doctoral education may influence PhD holders' experiences. We present a theoretical framework that includes self-perception, professional aspirations, and responses to work demands. Through three studies—one qualitative (n=16) and two correlational (n=445)—we examined how this framework applies to PhDs and other higher education graduates. We found notable disparities between the skills developed in doctoral programs and PhDs' own awareness of these skills. We also found that skill awareness is a key factor in responses to work demands. In other words, the discourse and awareness regarding skills developed in doctoral programs can indirectly impact PhDs' work experiences. This research underscores the need for a doctoral education system that not only focuses on providing relevant skills but also fosters introspection and self-awareness, essentials for PhDs' careers.

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*SYMPOSIUM 3*

## STEPPING OFF THE MACHINE: CHALLENGING NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION-FOCUSED ACADEMIC CONTRACTS

**Machi Sato, Kyoto University, Japan**

**Karin Watson, University of New South Wales, Australia**

**Collins Fleischner, University of New South Wales, Australia**

**Ricci Fong, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Bruce Macfarlane (Chair), The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

The literature on the disaggregation or ‘unbundling’ of the academic profession into separate ‘all round’ and ‘education-focused’ tracks, a phenomenon found in many countries and contexts including Australia, the UK, Hong Kong and Canada, presents a largely negative picture based on perceptions that roles excluding research undermine job satisfaction and symbolise the worst excesses of neo-liberal university policies. However, there is evidence to suggest that academics in education-focused roles may enjoy a more positive work-life balance than this negative argument would suggest. Benefits of moving from an all round to an education-focused one include reducing work performance pressure associated with research activities such as writing papers and applying for external grants, being able to focus more on teaching, combining work in the university with maintaining an alternative professional identity (eg as a dentist or a social worker), and facilitating a better work-life balance. Moreover, academics on all round academic contracts must also comply with increasingly prescriptive demands about what they research (according to funding opportunities and institutional priorities), how they research it (with a strong trend toward inter-disciplinary quantitative work in many fields) and even where they publish their findings (given departmental and institutional journal ranking lists). Perhaps ironically, academics on education-focused contracts may enjoy more academic freedom to explore opportunities presented by pedagogic research and engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning. This symposium will explore the experiences of education-focused academics who have chosen to step ‘off the machine’ for a variety of personal and professional reasons both in contexts where such contracts are well established (eg Australia, Hong Kong) and emerging (eg Japan).



## **Paper 1: “I am much happier to be in an education focused role” Stories of academics in Australia and Japan**

**Machi Sato, Kyoto University, Japan**

The number of education focused positions is increasing in Australian universities and continuous institutional endeavour is observed to offer better conditions and support for academics in such roles. However, education focused positions have yet to be formally introduced at Japanese universities. Yet, informally many Japanese academics fulfil this role in practice due to heavy teaching duties and a lack of time and opportunity to engage in research. In both Japan and Australia, the general perception is that such academics are less satisfied with this type of contract. But are they? This study focuses on the narratives of academics in education focused roles in Australia and Japan who expressed a sense of happiness to be in such a position and analyses how they construct such narratives. Interviewees expressed relief that they were released from the pressure of research performance and enjoyed a better life-work balance. Their expressions of emotion included ‘passion for the subject field’, ‘fulfilment at work’, ‘engagement with students’, and ‘joy of teaching’. In the symposium, I discuss how these felt emotions construct the narrative of their working life, which is free from the traditional idea of what an academic ought to be.

## **Paper 2: How the education focussed program at the University of New South Wales supports educational career pathways in a research-intensive environment**

**Karin Watson & Collins Fleischner, University of New South Wales,  
Australia**

The introduction of education focussed (EF) academic roles is a complex undertaking requiring changes to role expectations, promotions policies, and working relationships. It also necessitates challenges and changes to prevailing institutional cultures that have typically prized academics’ research achievements over their educational contributions. To support academics who have taken on this new academic role in a research-intensive university culture, the EF program at the University of New South Wales, founded in 2018, takes an holistic approach to academic development that supports EF academics’ teaching practice, career progression and sense of community through multiple streams of activities, including professional development events, grants programs, teaching fellowships, an annual retreat, and communities of practice. The EF program aims not only to support EF academics in their roles, but positive opportunities for them to receive greater recognition for their contributions to the university. It also provides EF academics with mechanisms by which they can influence institutional policies and processes to support this new academic role, and education across the institution more broadly.

### **Paper 3: Rethinking academic careers with an education focus: A self-narrative from Hong Kong**

**Ricci Fong, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

This paper outlines the trajectory of an academic who has transitioned to an education-focused academic position in Hong Kong. Through a reflective exploration of the academic's journey from being a school teacher to a research-focused academic, and later, to an education-focused academic spearheading teaching innovation initiatives in the Faculty, the paper emphasises the possibility of aligning personal values with professional pursuits by embracing an education-focused academic position. Contrary to traditional notions of academic careers, the often-overlooked positive aspects that education-focused academic positions offer will be explored. The perception of job satisfaction, career advancement opportunities, and personal fulfilment that are derived from deeper engagement with students and impactful educational initiatives will be discussed and reflected upon. This self-narrative points to an alternative, purpose-driven path in academic careers that can make a direct and profound impact on students' learning experiences and staff professional development in pedagogical innovation, thereby contributing meaningfully to the advancement of higher education.

### **Paper 4: The emergence and development of education focussed academic roles in Australian higher education**

**Collins Fleischner, University of New South Wales, Australia**

Over the last twenty years, education focussed (EF) academic roles have been introduced in an increasing number of institutions and higher education systems, including the UK, Canada, Singapore and Hong Kong. In Australia, EF academics are now the fastest growing group in the academic workforce.

These roles are seen to allow individual academics to focus their time and energies on teaching and 'educational leadership'. For many institutions, the EF role has been established as part of a broader strategic goal of delivering 'higher quality' educational experiences for their students. In many cases, this role has no expectation or workload provision for research and represents a conceptual and practical break from the more prevalent teaching and research model.

There is a growing literature about the EF role but much remains unknown. This paper will outline the findings of a study that investigated the rationales for the introduction of these academic roles across Australian higher education, the perspectives of those who have been responsible for their creation, the experiences of those who have been appointed to such positions, and the responses to these roles from staff within these institutions.

This paper seeks to inform regarding the emergence of the EF role in Australian higher education, to broaden understanding of the changing nature and practice of the academic role, and in turn, facilitate a critical dialogue on these topics with conference participants.

## Paper 1: Avoiding the “rat race”: Hong Kong students’ sense of belonging to a Chinese university in the Greater Bay Area

**Fang Gao, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

Inbound Hong Kong students constitute a substantial and growing population at mainland Chinese universities in the Greater Bay Area (the GBA) (China Education Exchange (HK) Centre, 2022). However, as yet, their university experiences and the ways in which they construct sense of belonging to Chinese universities have been under-researched areas. A sense of belonging to university is an important drive of psycho-social adaptation and academic success (Strayhorn, 2019). Theoretical models on belonging, grounded in sociology of education assume that homophily—being congruent with institutional (often mainstream) norms—is a precondition for belonging (Tinto, 1993). This assumption, however, places onus on those non-majority/non-local students for homogenising socially and academically into the host campus culture and thus omits the flexible and context-specific forms of university belongingness that such students from diverse backgrounds may forge (Gao & Liu, 2021; Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). The qualitative interview study was conducted in one Chinese university located in the GBA with ten students in years 1 and 2 of their undergraduate studies. The empirical findings suggest that the meaning they made of university belonging and belonging operation ran counter to the institutional culture of involution on the Chinese campus. Rather than being culturally congruent, these students developed friendships with other cross-border Cantonese-speaking peers and actively participated in non-academic campus activities, which reified their conceptions of university belonging and linked themselves to the larger campus community. The findings challenge the homophily belonging assumption and have implications for advancing the theoretical understanding of university belongingness within the university progression and persistence literature. They also have implications for Chinese higher education institutions and institutional agents that are concerned with meeting the needs of mobile students and promoting China’s higher education for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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## Paper 23: Desiring transnational higher education: Chinese queer international students and their narratives of educational mobility

**Haoxi Ou, University of Warwick, UK**

As the number of Chinese international students in the Global North continues to rise (Cheng et al., 2020), academic accounts of this group of students continue to flourish (Xu, 2022). However, the sexualities of these international students, and the experiences of Chinese queer international students in particular, have thus far been under-considered across this research area. Among existing research on Chinese international students, 'motivation' constitutes a key word, particularly when trying to understand Chinese queer international students' decisions around studying abroad. It is my argument, however, that there remains much to be thought about and discussed beyond the broadly rational framework of motivation. What, for example, about desire and its potentiality of blurring the border of normativity and certainty stressed by scientific and rational paradigms in this research area (Berlant, 2012; Fink, 1995)? In this presentation I explore if desire might open up analytical possibilities more attuned to a variety of orientations toward educational mobility (Bregnbæk & Bunkenborg, 2017). This paper will introduce the framework of desire to challenge the state of contemporary scholarship on international students orientations to international mobility. It examines early autobiographical storytelling data collected from Chinese queer international students studying in UK higher education institutions, which has allowed for the exploration of how individuals construct their complex life histories at the intersection of gendered and sexual subjectivities, and also enables us to glimpse into the penumbra of desire from their narratives. This presentation explores the possibilities that can be opened by the queer manoeuvre of thinking with desire in the area of international higher education. Arguably, this kind of interrogation requires us to rethink not only the networks of power that lie behind the topic of gender and sexuality, which is not readily visible in existing accounts, but also why and how focusing on desire can challenge current political norms.

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## Paper 52: Navigating the digital learning habitus through WeChat: A study of international students in China

**Xiaoyuan Li, City University of Macau, Macau SAR, China**

**Kun Dai, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

Digital media has played an increasingly significant role in the learning and acculturation experiences of international students globally. When learning and living in a foreign country, they often need to simultaneously navigate home and host media ecologies. This study explores how international students

in China navigate their digital learning experience through the popular social media platform WeChat, based on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field. Online interviews were conducted with 45 international students from diverse backgrounds studying at a Chinese university. Findings show that in the initial stages of using WeChat for learning purposes, participants began forming a "digital habitus" characterised by classificatory schemata and reflexive thinking to navigate the WeChat environment. Through continued engagement with WeChat as a learning tool, their digital habitus was reinforced through an intuitive acceptance of common practices within the doxic field of WeChat usage, characterised as ontological complicity. Additionally, their digital habitus exhibited flexible and mutable qualities aligning with the precarious nature of the digital WeChat field, which is dynamic and continually evolving. The findings indicate that participants gradually immersed themselves in the Chinese online learning culture through participation on WeChat. While the formation of their new digital habitus in China could be considered successful and facilitating international education to certain degrees, their agency to navigate the learning journey otherwise seemed to have been curtailed by the monopoly of WeChat in contemporary Chinese digital space. In sum, this research enhances understanding of how international students adapt to WeChat-mediated education in China and offers implications for institutional support during students' digital transition in China and other contexts.

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## Paper 8: The examination of the PhD thesis by publication in a South African Medical School

**Colleen Aldous, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

**Elly Grossman, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa**

We examined the assessment of doctoral theses by publication within the School of Clinical Medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), a comprehensive university in South Africa. The majority of students involved in this study were specialist clinicians. The analysis is based on 59 examiner reports from 20 doctoral researchers, all supervised by the same supervisor, who submitted theses by publications. The findings reveal several observations. Firstly, there is a lack of uniformity in marking styles among examiners, with some adopting traditional thesis examination practices and others adopting more diverse approaches. This highlights the need for more explicit guidelines in assessing the format effectively. However, most examiners still adhere to established criteria, suggesting that the assessment of the theses largely follows traditional norms. The alignment of assessment practices with emerging graduate attributes appears inconsistent, indicating a lack of well-defined understanding and application of these attributes. The inclusion of retrospective publications within the theses poses unique challenges. Examiners express concerns about assessing the intellectual input of candidates in multi-authored publications and the coherence of the thesis. This emphasises the need for more precise and standardised guidelines to ensure a consistent evaluation process. Addressing these challenges would better prepare UKZN's doctoral candidates for the evolving landscape of doctoral education and assessment. Clearer guidelines for candidates, supervisors, and examiners managing theses with published work are recommended. These guidelines would provide much-needed guidance on assessing graduate attributes and facilitate a more structured evaluation process. This study highlights the challenges faced by examiners when evaluating doctoral theses by publication. It emphasises the importance of aligning assessment practices with established benchmarks and emerging graduate attributes. The inclusion of retrospective publications within the theses further complicates the assessment process. The study underscores the need for more explicit and standardised guidelines to ensure a consistent evaluation process. By addressing these challenges and providing clearer guidelines, UKZN can better prepare their doctoral candidates for the changing landscape of doctoral education and assessment.

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## Paper 16: Querying the on/off campus binary: Re-conceptualising distance doctoral study

**James Burford, University of Warwick, UK**

**Katrina McChesney, University of Waikato, New Zealand**

**Liezel Frick, Stellenbosch University, South Africa**

As many scholars have observed, the COVID-19 pandemic demanded unprecedented and wide-scale changes within higher education institutions, with a primary adaptation being a transition from 'traditional face-to-face instruction to distance learning formats' (Neuwirth, Jović & Mukherji, 2021, p. 141). Rather than a planned shift, this rapid change to distance learning was primarily carried out in the context of emergency remote teaching. Across the doctoral education literature, there has been a focus on the impacts of the pandemic on doctoral supervision practices, how doctoral learning environments were transformed by going online, and serious disruptions to taken-for-granted doctoral mobilities. Within doctoral education scholarship, there is a developing consensus that changes in the wake of the pandemic have been highly significant. Doctoral education scholars have variously described COVID-19 as a 'disruption' (Herbst, 2021, p. 110), a 'shock' (Grant et al., 2022, p. 33) and an 'opportunity for change' (Reis & Grady, 2020, p. 136). While doctoral education research in the wake COVID-19 has evoked a tumultuous scene of uncertainty and transformation, in this presentation we argue that it is equally important to look at continuities in the pre- and post-pandemic doctorate. Extending from previous work (O'Regan, 2020), our presentation attends to the growing complexity of off-campus modes of doctoral study; a trend amplified and accelerated by the pandemic, but which also has a history predating it. Drawing on a 2022 survey which captured the insights of 521 respondents, we explore the current nature of distance doctoral education in order to facilitate greater clarity about the various arrangements students make to work off-campus. In the article, we argue that distance doctoral education is a practice which was in need of redefinition even before the pandemic emerged. However, in the wake of the pandemic, which saw many students and university staff working off-campus due to emergency social distancing measures, there is a pressing need to understand whether the on/off-campus binary has been further disrupted, perhaps beyond repair.

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## PERFORMANCE 2

# LAUGH (LIKE A MEDUSA) AT THE MACHINE: HÉLÈNE CIXOUS AND LAUGHTER AS CRITICAL RESISTANCE IN THE ACADEMY

**Kirsten Locke, Waipapa Taumata Rau/University of Auckland, New Zealand**

**Katrina McChesney, Waikato University, New Zealand**

Over the past 12 months, we (two mid-career academic women) have been engaging in imagined dialogue with Hélène Cixous. Through this performance-based presentation, we share some of this journey with our audience, creating time and space to sit together and breathe in Cixous's starkly challenging yet also fundamentally hopeful wisdom. In texts such as *The Laugh of the Medusa* (Cixous, 1976) and *Castration and Decapitation* (Cixous, 1981), Cixous offers a critical lens on the fundamentally masculine order that the university imposes not only on women but on all who do not inhabit its normative expectations. And yet, this is both more than and less than what Cixous does through these texts. Our interpretation of the texts (already, themselves, re-made through their translation from the original French into English) and our application of Cixous's ideas to critical university studies thus engages us in a project of re-making. In this session, we invite the audience to listen in on our imagined, re-made dialogues with Cixous. We bring in Cixous's voice explicitly, as a poetic guide whose presence we have conjured in our texts. With her scented perfume smoke, elegant hands, girlish voice, delighted laughter, and wryly wise and irreverent voice, 'our' Cixous has sat with us in co-conspiratorial solidarity, willing us to stretch our thinking, re-know and re-make ourselves, and take brave steps forward toward. Thus, the two of us, and an academic godmother reading the role of Cixous, will sit and talk together, exploring the possibilities of laughter as a counterbalance to rage. We recognise the necessity of the (extensive) academic discourse that centres on all that is wrong with universities. However, we also recognise the risks of dwelling too much on the negative if this is not accompanied by a courageous, agentic, audacious (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) form of hope. Remaking Cixous's laughing Medusa in our own images as academic women, in this presentation we explore how laughter can help liberate us, connect us, recalibrate our perspectives, and support our wellbeing while also embodying political power as a form of critical resistance in response to the performative, neoliberal university machine.

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### ROUNDTABLE 3

## A MUMIFESTO FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

**Sandra Clare, University of Manchester, UK**

Mothers and those mothering are being failed in higher education as they are not recognised, resourced, or represented (Fraser, 1995). I propose a roundtable discussion, utilising the principles of manifesto construction (hopes, aims, beliefs, and motivations) to reimagine their place in academia. My doctoral research investigated young-student-mothering as a social justice concern, yet I note insurmountable evidence from other research, reading, and my own lived experiences, that many of the challenges exposed relate to their mothering and not to their youth – mothering always amplifies intersectional disadvantage. There are wide ranging problems, evident to varying degrees, for all who are mothering in academia (Moreau and Wheeler, 2023). Echoing Andrea O'Reilly (2016), I start from the perspective that mothers are disadvantaged, and doubly so, within capitalist patriarchy; first as women and again as mothers. Despite seductive 'choices' and 'opportunities' to be educated or educators, the burden of gendered unpaid care remains unchanged (Otto, 2023; O'Reilly and Green, 2021), reducing capacity to engage alongside unencumbered peers. This roundtable discussion is not about whether mothering is penalised in academia but about navigating mothering in a rapaciously marketised education system and of envisioning new possibilities. Inspired by Nancy Fraser's (1995) work on social justice, this roundtable discussion will explore transformative approaches to injustices. Rejecting 'one-size fits all' solutions, the aim is to consider drafting a Mumifesto for higher education. A document that can be tailored for individual institutions to critically examine mothering in their context and develop compassionate and collaborative local solutions. Fraser's 3Rs model of social justice will frame discussions:

1. How could mothering be politically recognised by higher education?
2. How could higher education economically resource mothering?
3. How could mothering be culturally represented in higher education?

An international panel of educators and critically engaged scholars will provide valuable insights for the future of mothering in higher education. Through sharing 'best' practices and conceptualising ways to mitigate disadvantages, this roundtable discussion will provide a vital starting point for the development of a 'Mumifesto'; setting an inclusive agenda that places respect for, and understanding of, mothering at its very heart.

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## Paper 5: Implementing English-medium instruction in Vietnamese higher education: Causing harm while doing good?

**Hoà Tăng, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Khanh Nguyen, The International University, Vietnam National University, Vietnam**

Vietnamese HE has suffered from several shortcomings, including but not limited to teaching and learning. Indeed, Vietnamese-medium instruction (VMI) has been considered mass education, representing poor quality, and thus needs reforming. The Vietnamese government has adopted various solutions, among which is teaching and learning in foreign languages, especially English. When being implemented, English-medium instruction (EMI) is instructed to involve importing whole EMI programmes from esteemed universities and inviting first foreign professors and then Vietnamese instructors with foreign qualifications to teach. Therefore, EMI is regarded as high quality education and charges much higher fees than VMI does, from 2.5 to 25 times higher as of 2018. However, rather than supplanting VMI altogether, EMI has been implemented in parallel with VMI and consequently offers access to only economically advantaged students, leaving others limited to VMI. Although the effects of EMI on EMI students have been extensively researched, those on EMI and VMI graduates have been overlooked. This study, hence, sets out to examine such effects by drawing upon theoretical concepts of (dis)parity, distribution, and self-amplifying loop and upon interviews with EMI and VMI graduates. Thematic analysis of the data identifies three disparities following from EMI and VMI: (1) English proficiency and Anglo-American acculturation, (2) dissimilar rates of access to English-speaking jobs, and (3) divergent professional trajectories. The foregoing disparities are underlain by the uneven distribution of resources between EMI and VMI that is enlarged by self-amplifying loops. Accordingly, HE permits both EMI and VMI graduates to have more, yet EMI enables EMI graduates to have more by a larger margin but causes VMI ones to have more at a slower rate. As such, albeit well-intentioned, EMI in HE appears to reproduce and reinforce socio-economic inequality. A rethink of its implementation is called for so that Vietnamese HE does not increase or, better still, reduces inequality.

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## Paper 14: Decolonial relationality in higher education: building partnerships in resistance to coloniality

**Jennifer Fraser, The University of Westminster, UK**

**Fatima Maatwk, The University of Westminster, UK**

**Kyra Araneta, The University of Westminster, UK**

In an era marked by fragmentation, inequality, and the deepening of neoliberal, imperial and racist ideologies and structures, higher education institutions are increasingly being recognised for their complicity in perpetuating socially-unjust ways of thinking and being. While a substantial body of literature has explored this complicity across various contexts and academic settings (eg Patel, 2015; Grande, 2018; Stein et al., 2021; Bell, 2022), this paper attempts to unsettle the colonial-capitalistic logics of the university which directly shape the existence of academics, students, and professional staff within institutional life. “Existence-based violence” is a term that encompasses the institutionality of racialised, gendered and epistemic violence, and its attempts to redefine the humanity of marginalised individuals and groups (Walsh, 2021). In the context of higher education institutions, we argue that existence-based violence manifests across curricula, research and relationships; through systemic forces and mechanisms which control and silence their voices, bodies, minds and resistance. Focusing on relationships in particular, the neoliberal capitalistic orientation of higher education imposes a range of barriers on relationship dynamics and the transformative work we are able to do within our small communities of resistance (Dutta et al., 2022). Guided by our roots in student-staff partnership and positioning in the academic-activist community, we centre our relations to not only problematise the traditionally hierarchical student-staff dynamic, but the colonial nature of relationality in the academy itself. As a decolonial praxis, re-existence in higher education typically refers to the strategies used to resist the structure of the colonial university and move towards an ethics of care (Memon and Jivraj, 2020) and building decolonial atmospheres (Bell, 2018). In contribution, we argue that resistance/re-existence work in the university should be practised through decolonial relationality. Fostering collaboration and partnerships that are borne in constant resistance to coloniality and intellectually grounded in diverse knowledge systems is at the heart of this concept – but it also encompasses our relations to knowledge, land, power and institutions themselves. As a way of thinking, being and doing, decolonial relationality provides an opportunity to rehumanise ourselves (and others) by challenging the ways we have come to be in relation to things. Taking into account our own praxis as well as our positioning in the metropole (UK), we offer this paper to draw attention to the multifaceted, contextual nature of colonial violence and the importance of generating spaces and strategies that are grounded in decolonial relationality.

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## Paper 40: Co-creating critical consciousness: Disrupting the university with affect and mattering

**Amy Maclatchy, University of Westminster, UK**  
**Moonisah Usman, University of Westminster, UK**

*"Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom" (Freire, 1970).*

Whilst universities may have transformed by encouraging entry of students from diverse backgrounds, institutional awarding gaps highlight how they continue to produce inequitable outcomes. For racially minoritised students and staff, university can be described as a site of struggle. The struggle is embedded in cultural stigmas and systemic racism (Ugiagbe-Green and Ernsting, 2022). The increasing value placed on Eurocentric epistemologies and neoliberal metric-driven principles, impact our pedagogical practices and constrain the transformations we hope for. Challenging the higher education (HE) landscape is fundamental for its participants and for creating a shift in society towards equity and justice. As Tuck and Yang (2018) remind us 'social justice is the ghost in the machine of the educational apparatus. It is the only part that makes any part of the field of education matter'. To work towards education as the practice of freedom, we make an argument for education to be embedded in social realities. The work we undertake must represent our students and their realities, providing opportunities to consider how they and others like them matter in the university, discipline and society. Rather than prescribe the narrative students are taught, we seek to create the time and space to explore their voices and experiences, to facilitate the transformation that matters. Such spaces may expose our vulnerabilities and require dismantling of traditional power dynamics, towards more democratic practices that allow relationship building and storytelling (hooks, 1994). In this paper, we will share how we engage with subjectivities and affect through student partnership in our life sciences classrooms to co-create principled, decolonial spaces. Through problem-posing education, we develop critical consciousness and support students with acquiring critical thinking tools to engage with alternative narratives and discourse. By embedding these tools in our classroom, we can challenge the coloniality and objectivity of scientific academic practice and drive education for social transformation.

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## Paper 42: What is it to indigenise the university?

**Sean Sturm, University of Auckland, New Zealand**

Our university in New Zealand (Aotearoa) has recently embarked on a process of institutional change that has been described as one of Indigenisation. It has, among other innovations, a new Indigenous (Māori) name, strategic plan "consistent with" three Indigenous "fundamental principles," framework for locating the University in its Indigenous place and its peoples and articulated in a compulsory early undergraduate course in each faculty, and commitment to the Indigenous language. Some see the process of

Indigenisation as a strategic manoeuvre: they say that the Vice-Chancellor sees it as a way to bolster their reputation as an institutional “change leader.” Some see it as a marketing strategy: they say that senior management see it as about “product differentiation” for the institution in the global higher education “market.” Some even see it as a political coup: they say that it serves an Indigenous agenda to co-opt the institution akin to that of the Church in premodern England or the State in 20th-century communism by suppressing criticism in the name of academic freedom of Indigenisation (see Nola et al., 2021). Others – like the Pro-Vice Chancellor Māori (Hoskins, 2021) ... and myself, I must say (Sturm, in press) – see it as a “normalisation of Indigenous ways of being and knowing” in the institution (Hoskins & Jones, 2022, p. 207). This normalisation, for whatever reason it is undertaken,

- challenges the institution to define itself in relation to the Indigenous place and peoples in which it finds itself
- recognises Indigenous peoples and knowledges in the institution, and, critically,
- allows Indigenous peoples and their allies to hold the institution to its commitments to Indigenisation.

But it should allow for more – or other – than the “normalisation” of Indigenous ways of being and knowing if normalisation means their routinisation (as normal, or ordinary) or, in particular, their standardisation (as normative, or universal). Against the often routine ontological anthropocentrism and epistemic violence of non-Indigenous knowledge and universities (Yang, 2017), it should embrace the multinaturalism and pluralism of Indigenous ways of being and knowing (De Castro, 2005). And, most significantly, it should be ontologically prefigurative, for Indigenous peoples, of new ways of being Indigenous and, perhaps, for those non-Indigenous allies and others who attend to Indigenous ways of being, of new ways of being-with Indigenous peoples.

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## Paper 11: Shifting paradigms in higher education: Institutional responses to state-level policies on internationalisation pre- and post-pandemic

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Before the pandemic, the landscape of higher education internationalisation was largely shaped by national policies, with initiatives like the DAAD Strategy and the Bologna Process playing a pivotal role. This influence is evident from the fact that 44% of the top 100 universities are in countries with such programs (Crăciun, 2018), and 73% of respondents in the EAIE Barometer saw EU policies as beneficial to their university's internationalisation efforts (Sandström & Hudson, 2018). These statistics underscore the significant role state-level policies played in defining the strategies and priorities of HEIs in the realm of international education. The pandemic, however, marked a significant turning point, bringing profound shifts in the social-economic framework, national politics, and international relations, which have greatly impacted the educational sector. HEIs are contending with new challenges such as economic downturns and evolving societal demands like climate action, within a complex international context. These changes may have prompted a paradigm shift in higher education, necessitating a reevaluation of HEIs' internationalisation strategies and approaches. This research critically examines the impact of the pandemic on the effectiveness of state-level educational internationalisation policies in OECD countries post-2020. It aims to address 3 key questions: 1) The extent of the pandemic's disruption on these policies; 2) The factors contributing to this shift; and 3) The mechanisms through which these factors influence the new paradigm. A mixed-method approach is employed for this analysis. A regression discontinuity in time (RDIT) model is used for the first question, with time as the independent variable and internationalisation level (measured by international mobile students) as the dependent variable. For the second and third questions, thematic analysis is applied to identify specific factors and examine the processes behind policy disruption, using data from policy documents of OECD countries, sourced from the OECD website, Education at a Glance, and country-specific websites like the UK's Department for Education. This study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of state-level policies and empirical evidence of their adaptability in the post-pandemic landscape.

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## Paper 22: Troubling the façade of diversity: Re-viewing leaders and leadership in elite universities

**Tanya Fitzgerald, The University of Western Australia, Australia**  
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Universities as research-intensive global institutions that are geographically and culturally diverse require Vice Chancellors, rectors or Presidents who can lead these complex institutions. Curiously, at this elite leadership level there is a homogeneity to the face of leadership that suggests that the processes that produce and reproduce these leaders as well as the mechanisms and



dynamics behind the exclusion of minority groups require serious attention. A cursory glance of university websites reveals an unambiguous commitment to their public mission, an unrelenting attention to university rankings and espoused research and teaching successes, and virtuous statements about an institutional culture of inclusivity, acceptance, and diversity. However, less attention is paid to how university leaders and leadership might reflect these broader commitments in terms of who is appointed as Vice Chancellors, Presidents, or Rectors. Despite the rhetoric about the importance of an inclusive and diverse workforce, the reality is that gendered and racialised organisational cultures in higher education continue to be an institutional norm. As we highlight in this paper, there is an underpinning rhetoric of meritocracy that works as a visible and audible performative tool that renders leadership in elite universities as predominantly the domain of white males. We argue that underpinning rhetoric of meritocracy works as a visible and audible performative tool that offers an appearance of a just, fair, and neutral process, yet reinforces the sameness of leadership. This paper presents an analysis of the biographies and career trajectories of those who lead the world's most elite universities and considers ways in which leadership in these institutions are exclusionary spaces.

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## Paper 75: Creating conditions for middle leadership development in hierarchical contexts: The role of institutional leaders

**Ni Zhang, University of Glasgow, UK**

In the field of educational leadership research, middle leadership has become an essential focus of academic research and development (Lillejord and Børte, 2020). In line with the earlier research focus in the Western literature, the dominant themes of middle leadership research in China involve role conflict, competency requirements, scope of responsibility, and summaries of successful leadership experiences (Lee and Ip, 2023). However, research on the professional development for middle leaders (PD for MLs) and its influencing factors is still limited. The bulk of literature on PD revealed that leadership that motivates, supports, and sustains individual learning and development has a knock-on effect on teaching quality, student learning, and institution progress (Liu, Hallinger and Feng, 2016). This study, positioned in Chinese higher vocational colleges (CHVCs), attempts to explore in what ways institutional leaders (ILs) impact the PD for MLs in the Chinese hierarchical context. This study uses data collected from four CHVCs in Shandong Province, exploring the basic ways to impact PD for MLs by ILs. The findings identify five leadership strategies adopted by ILs and related insights into embedding ongoing professional learning for MLs in educational institutions, involving constructing the learning vision, building the learning community, optimising the learning environment, monitoring the learning programme, and setting learning role-models. This study confirms that in the context of the Chinese hierarchical system, ILs utilise a combination of bureaucratic and distributed leadership strategies to support PD for MLs, which is able to effectively alleviate the

tension between control and autonomy faced by MLs. Notably, although MLs gain the autonomy to carry out or participate in learning activities by virtue of their inherent position authority, in many cases, such autonomy is uncertain and given way to other matters. In light of this consideration, besides directly participating in PD for MLs as part of learning resources, ILs also strengthen MLs' identification with PD by creating enabling structural and cultural conditions. The positive findings of this study support the broader international literature which increasingly highlights ILs in facilitating the productive involvement of MLs in PD and capacity building (Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Bryant and Walker, 2022).

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## Paper 34: Paradoxes in the making of an education hub: Policy rationales and students' experiences

**Pan Suyan, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

Understanding the impact of transnational HE services on its various stakeholders has become an important theme in research on international higher education (HE) during the last decade (Branch, 2019; De Wit & Altbach, 2021), and the resulting development of “education hubs” – a term often used by policymakers in countries and cities trying to position themselves as reputed centers of excellence in HE, training, and research in the region and beyond (Knight, 2018). Three thematic discourses – neo-liberalism, soft power, internationalisation of HE – provide prevalent lenses for policy rationales. However, there is still a lack of empirical studies reflecting on how these rationale-based HE policies work in practice. In particular, studies into the emerging education hubs in non-Western societies are rare, whilst using empirical evidence to reflect on the policy outcomes is also lacking (Tight, 2022). This presentation aims to use critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) and empirical data to reflect on the education hub initiative in the specific context of Hong Kong. It draws findings from a research project that investigated how in-bound students perceived their university experiences in Hong Kong, including [1] motivations to choose Hong Kong as a study abroad destination, [2] academic and socio-cultural engagement on-and-off campus, and [3] after-study intentions to maintain social and professional connections with Hong Kong. Findings reveal paradoxes embedded in the policy and practice surrounding the education hub initiative. While policy rationales were prominent in generating discursive imaginaries of a hub status as public goods for the host society, they did not explicitly yield expected outcomes in the lived realities, because students' experiences were not determined solely by policy goals. This presentation will be of particular interest to scholars of the internationalisation of higher education.

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## Paper 20: Looking for signs of life in university archives: Researching the inorganic agency of a 1968 student union

**Frances Kelly, Waipapa Taumata Rau / University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand**

This paper draws on traditions of radical ‘historians who walk’ (Guldi, 2011) to consider the past university as a form of archive. The methodology foregrounds embodiment and ecology in everyday spaces on campus, researching aspects of one university’s history to highlight the impact of built environments on students’ changing embodied interactions in space. It takes seriously recent historians’ exhortations to re-examine the conventional tools

of historical practice and to recognise the intertwined ecologies of living and material worlds (Anderson, 2015; Priem, 2022). Traversing a university archive of architectural reports and the physical site of a student union completed in 1968, I examine the entanglement of buildings, objects and living things that form the site's unique ecology. This engagement with the archive encourages an imaginative (re)exploration of a familiar everyday place on campus, adding to a capacity for recognising and navigating forces of power and agency. As I discuss, the defamiliarisation of this familiar site on campus also potentially fosters environmental awareness, if thinking ecologically involves recognising the place we occupy in a system (Bateson, 2000), and acknowledging the inorganic agency (McPhie, 2019) or capacity to affect or even 'educate' of spaces like a 1960s student union building.

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## Paper 29: In search of meaning and purpose in the transition from university to the world of work

### Xiaoshi Li, Nanjing Normal University, China

Students today are in the pipeline to accumulate the capabilities and skills demanded by the labour markets. However, given the fluctuating world of work in changing times, the wish list of labour market demands is evolving and expanding; the job competition, insecurity, precarity, and mobility have been increasing globally (Eloundou et al., 2023; Livanos & Papadopoulos, 2019). While graduate employment is central on the agenda of universities, it is not enough to simply prepare students for jobs as objectified *human capital*. Against this backdrop, how can we prepare students for an uncertain future world of work – as *human beings* with intention and direction to navigate dynamic career paths? Meaningful work is a key pillar of individual wellbeing and quality of life (Blustein et al., 2023). This merits a growing emphasis on the construction of meaning and purpose at work in order to create stability from within (Hartung & Taber, 2013). The paper therefore explores how students perceive the meaning of work and how they seek purpose in work during the challenging transitional period. To observe the evolving nature of students' work transitions from a longitudinal perspective, 26 mainland Chinese students from various master's programmes in Hong Kong participated in semi-structured interviews from August to October 2021, and 12 of them participated in a follow-up round of semi-structured interviews in August 2022. Based on the qualitative content analysis, four types of meaning were identified to illustrate how students perceive the meaning of work: *thrive, survive, (dis)connect, and contribute*. Furthermore, based on the analytical framework of self-formation, two pathways to purposeful work were expounded, namely through inward self-formation by cultivating capabilities and outward self-formation by cultivating moral qualities. The findings also revealed the tensions between individual agency and environmental forces in students' early search for meaning and purpose at work. This study contributes to current discussions on employability and university-to-work transition, with a particular focus on the ongoing construction of meaning and purpose at work among graduates. Theoretical and practical implications for a wide range of stakeholders involved in graduate employment were also discussed.

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## Paper 44: Residential halls in the Hong Kong higher education – a changing attitude?

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When university residential halls were first established in the Oxbridge model, the aim was to create an environment that could develop students' character, values, manners, and personal growth. However, since the end of the Second World War in 1945, attitudes towards student accommodation in higher education in the United Kingdom have changed. As described by Tight (2011), most UK higher education institutions with student accommodation now perceive themselves as landlords rather than guardians. The massification of higher education provision and neoliberalism have downplayed the importance of student accommodation over the last 50 years. Hong Kong was a British colony between 1842 and 1997 and The University of Hong Kong was established in 1911 as a residential university, influenced by the Oxbridge collegial education model. Living in a university residential hall was a requirement for acceptance as an undergraduate student. Residential halls with educational value were purposely advocated at the university as an essential element for promoting student development. However, given the changes in attitudes towards student accommodation in the UK, it is important to investigate how Hong Kong higher education has managed this aspect of student life. Therefore, this study aims to track the development of residential halls in the Hong Kong higher education setting by analysing higher education policy documents and reports, and critical academic monographs and journal articles published after the post-war period. As higher education has become increasingly commercialised, universities may view student housing as a source of revenue rather than an opportunity for student growth and development. Thus, this study will demonstrate how higher education in Hong Kong positions itself in managing student accommodation, and critically reviews whether it is still fulfilling its original purpose of promoting student academic and holistic development.

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## Paper 4: Perceived academic working conditions and career choices of Chinese PhD students

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**Hugo Horta, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

Research has shown that pursuing doctoral studies is often related to the desire to become an academic, despite evidence of constrained academic labor markets and changing (some have argued, deteriorating, e.g., Cardoso et al. 2019; Shin and Jung 2014) academic working conditions (AWC) worldwide. This study assesses the extent to which PhD students are aware of the changes taking place in the academic profession and, if so, whether this awareness influences their career choices. We conducted a narrative inquiry involving 29 mainland Chinese PhD students and PhD graduates in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau to elicit their perceptions of AWC in mainland China, their main academic labor market, and how these perceptions may have informed their career intentions. We found that perceptions of unfavorable AWC tended to dissuade PhD students from pursuing a career in academia, but not always in the same way. This led us to conceptually identify four types of decision-makers: the Materialist, the Academic Striver, the Undecided, and the Comfort Seeker, based on the PhD students' motivations for achievement and desire for autonomy. We found that the ruthless tenure-track system and excessive competition were the primary concerns of all PhD students but of concern mostly for the Comfort Seekers (high motivation for autonomy and low for achievement). Guanxi, hierarchical academic communities, the segmented academic labor market, and low remuneration were also perceived as major drawbacks of seeking a career in academia by most PhD students, particularly the Materialists (high motivation for achievement and low for autonomy). Our study aligns with the conference theme, as it delves into the challenges faced by aspiring academics within the existing academic system. By examining the impact of AWC on PhD students' career choices, it sheds light on the need for transformative changes within universities, advocating for a more hopeful future where talent and scientific breakthrough are prioritised. This study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on remaking universities and striving towards a more sustainable academia.

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## Paper 33: Beyond publish or perish: Exploring the diverse publication pursuits of Chinese and American math doctorates

**Tszsum Chan, Peking University, China**

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The global emphasis on academic publishing is particularly pronounced in doctoral education. In China, fueled by university ranking competitions and a rapidly congested academic job market, a "publish or perish" mentality has pervaded research-focused doctoral programs (Horta and Li, 2023). Historically, from the late 1990s onwards, many Chinese universities mandated doctoral candidates to produce multiple publications as a prerequisite for their oral defense (Li, 2016). This requirement became a predominant stressor for these students (Tijdkink, Vergouwen, & Smulder, 2013) until the recent "Breaking the

Five Only” policy revision (MOE and MOST, 2020). Despite this change, only a handful of institutions have abolished this publication prerequisite completely (Wei, 2023). Given this backdrop, this study aims to contrast the publication trends between Chinese and American doctoral students to identify unique characteristics. Using a comparative approach, we analysed the publication records of doctoral candidates from mathematics departments of select prominent universities in China and the US from 2013 to 2020. Our data sources included institutional thesis repositories like Peking University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, supplemented with the Web of Science and Scopus databases, covering 320 doctoral students across four institutions. The goal was to discern distinct publication patterns among these candidates. Findings reveal that Chinese doctoral students prioritise publication quantity over quality. In contrast, their American counterparts focus more on the quality than the sheer number of publications. Additionally, Chinese students often collaborate with their advisors during the publication phase, whereas American students display a greater inclination toward independent authorship or peer collaboration. Despite collaborations, Chinese students’ targeted journals don’t always meet the highest quality standards. Given these insights, this study recommends revisiting the policies of Chinese doctoral education, emphasising the need to foster an environment prioritising genuine academic advancement over mere publication metrics.

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## Paper 43: PhD holders working beyond academia looking back to their PhD training

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**Montserrat Castelló, University Ramon Llull, Spain**

PhD training is evolving to meet the demands of the knowledge society, changing its original academic purposes, conditions, structure, and content (Castelló et al., 2023; Hancock & Walsh, 2014). However, little is known about how PhD holders, especially those pursuing non-academic careers, perceive and value their PhD training experiences and relate them to their job requirements. This is crucial given that over half of PhD graduates across countries pursue non-academic careers, dealing with new requirements in their labour market (Passaretta et al., 2019). Our study focused on how Spanish PhD holders developing non-academic careers explain and appraise the dimensions of PhD training: purposes (for what), structure and conditions (how), and skills and competences (what) provided by their PhD programs. Moreover, we collected participants’ suggestions for training improvement. We interviewed 35 PhD holders, 16 men and 19 women from different

disciplines and sectors, all of whom had obtained their PhD degrees from Spanish universities within the last decade. The results revealed tensions between the purposes of PhD academic training and their non-academic career development. Participants highlighted the need for fostering critical thinking and equipping them to navigate complex and uncertain contexts. The findings also underlined the need to broaden the scope of PhD training, both in terms of competencies and skills and the conditions under which training takes place. Research autonomy and freedom were seen as strengths, highlighting the importance of personalised and flexible itineraries for those developing their careers in non-academic settings. The most valued skills were transversal, interpersonal, and generic research skills, which were valued as useful in a wide range of contexts, particularly those related to problem solving, critical thinking, and communication. Our study contributes to the ongoing critical debates on the direction of PhD training as something beyond the linear production of future academics (Castelló et al., 2023; Hancock & Walsh, 2014). Results point towards moving beyond the current dichotomy between market-oriented and academically-oriented approaches by aligning PhD training with the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (Owen et al., 2012) and offering relevant training for diversified researcher career development, either in academic, non-academic or hybrid contexts.

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### Paper 69: Pursuing doctoral study in alternative destinations: An exploration of Chinese students in Southeast Asia

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Current research has extensively explored the motivations of international students to pursue higher education abroad from the global South to North. While some recent studies begin to pay attention to international students' motivations to study in non-Western and emerging educational hubs such as China across all levels of higher education, few have examined the factors influencing Chinese students' decision-making to pursue doctoral education in non-traditional destinations, such as Southeast Asia. Utilising the three-level (macro, meso, micro) push-pull theory, this study adopted an exploratory qualitative research design to understand why Chinese students pursue doctoral study in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand and identified the dynamic push-pull factors influencing their destination choice. An exploratory qualitative research design is adopted in this study. The participants were recruited via snowball sampling through the researchers' academic networks based on two criteria: 1) participants should be Chinese citizens; 2) they are attending doctoral degree programs



in Southeast Asia countries. Eventually, 26 participants from universities in three Southeast countries joined the study. Findings show that students are systematically pushed by national, institutional, and individual factors within the Chinese higher education context, and pulled to study in the Southeast Asian region based on its comparative advantages vis-a-vis the Chinese and Western doctoral systems. Findings implicate on why Southeast Asian doctoral degrees may have become a 'shortcut' for Chinese students seeking a degree upgrade, as well as a dynamic approach to understanding the push-pull factors in international doctoral education set against local, regional, and global contexts. It is also important for policymakers and universities in the Chinese higher education system to critically consider and reform potential structural barriers in doctoral education. Moreover, universities and academics in Southeast Asian countries may strategically improve doctoral programs and provide more scholarship opportunities for international students to gain students in the international market as emerging destinations.

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## Paper 17: The duty to explain: A positive defence of academic freedom in the social sciences

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Understanding of student academic freedom is often framed in terms of the right to non-indoctrination on the basis that a university teacher should not use their power and position to impose their own view of the world on students as developing thinkers and learners. Whilst this negative right, and arguments concerning apparent breaches of it, have long been the focus of right-wing critics of the university (eg Horowitz, 2007) there has been little attempt to focus on developing a corresponding, positive academic duty. This paper will critically examine and draw on interpretations of the duty of care from other professions, including journalism, medicine and the legal profession, to define a university teacher's duty to explain. The 'duty to explain' in both the legal and medical professions implies that lawyers and doctors need to ensure their clients remain autonomous by being in complete possession of the facts (and risks) concerning their cases. In a university context the teachers' duty to explain represents a vital means of helping students to develop autonomy through making the politics of constitutive practices visible (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016), broadening and deepening their understanding and perspectives with regard to social phenomenon in a full political and economic context. This duty highlights the importance of academics possessing intellectual self-discipline, self-reflection/problematisation and successfully living out the neglected virtue of disinterestedness (Hamerton, 1873), associated mainly with research, in a teaching context too. Here, there is a duty to balance evidence and present all sides of an argument or issue to a client or to a student. Exercising such duties with care makes it possible for the student, rather than the teacher, to be the inquisitor-in-chief in evaluating knowledge claims. The duty to explain further represents an important socio-political defence of the role of the social sciences in society especially in contexts where academic freedom is weakly established or fragile.

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## Paper 19: Academic freedom in an era of marketisation

**Christine Muhonja Olando, University of Warwick, UK**

Academic freedom is one of the freedoms that has been little discussed or analysed in discussions on rights and freedoms (Byrne, 1989; Altbach, 2001). Academic freedom is defined as the freedom of academics to teach and conduct research, the freedom of learners in the academy to explore and learn and the freedom of academics to disseminate and transmit their knowledge ((Byrne, 1989; Altbach, 2001). There has been extensive scholarly work on how academic freedom is limited by external factors such as state control (Widner, 1992) and control by funding agencies (Benner & Sandsrtrom, 2000). Internally, academic freedom may be limited by university administration by controlling the activities of academic staff. While some definitions of academic freedom centre on the freedom of the learner, this is conceptualised as an extension of the freedom that is



available to the teacher. This paper highlights how crucial it is to conceptualise academic freedom from the independent perspective of the learner. This paper argues that the learner is the key stakeholder in every higher education institution and their perspectives and interests are of paramount importance. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, deemed the most authoritative expression of the right to higher education, provides that higher education shall be made equally accessible to all on the basis of capacity by progressive introduction of free education. This means that higher education need not be provided for free but can instead be rightfully charged. The freedom to charge for higher education enables the existence of not only a privatized system, but also a marketised system of higher education. Marketisation of higher education, defined as the process of availing higher education based on the economic concept of a market (Brown, 2015) poses a number of challenges to the sustenance and enjoyment of academic freedom by the learner. While arguing against Marketisation of higher education, this paper discusses the limitations of Marketisation to the enjoyment of academic freedom by learners.

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### Paper 3: Examining perspectives on supporting female academic's careers: Insights from male and female academics at a Chinese research university

**Li Tang, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Hugo Horta, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

Persistent gender inequalities in higher education are an ongoing concern among academics and institutional policy measures to promote gender equality have been common in most western developed countries (Drange et al. 2023; Monroe et al. 2008; Teelken and Deem 2013). This paper critically investigates how academics perceive the need for gender-related changes to support female academic's career advancement in China. Drawing on 40 interviews with both male and female academics at a leading Chinese research university, this study reveals that attitudes among male academics were overwhelmingly negative toward the necessity for gender-related changes, whereas female academics' responses varied. The analysis uncovers two key factors underlying the reluctance of both male and female academics to advocate for gender-related policy changes. Firstly, there was a strong belief among these academics in merit-based promotion rules, which inadvertently perpetuated gender-blind practices in the name of 'fairness'. Secondly, the power of individual choice was the determining factor for female academic's career progression, although both male and female academics acknowledged that their traditional cultural beliefs were rooted in processes and practices that systematically disadvantaged female academics. The findings expose academics' low expectations for the successful creation or implementation of institutional policies that support female academic's career development, considering that male academics did not support gender-related changes, and female academics were not united in their perspectives. Additionally, socio-cultural norms emerged as a significant obstacle. The analysis highlights the substantial challenge posed by the meritocracy discourse and individualised discourses of career and success in relation to institutional changes targeting gender inequalities as these discourses perpetuate the socio-culturally structured gender inequalities in academia and disavow organisational responsibilities.

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### Paper 18: Democratising Indian higher education: Narratives of women academics

**Gauri Khanna, O.P. Jindal Global University, India**

India is the largest democracy with one of the largest higher education systems in the world. Since India's independence women's access to higher education has progressively expanded, however, they continue to remain under-represented in positions of value and authority in these institutes (Gandhi & Sen, 2021). Through the qualitative method of narrative inquiry, this paper aims to understand the experiences of women working as faculty members in Indian higher education institutes. The data is part of the larger ongoing thesis study. The objective is to investigate the extent of women's democratic participation in higher education as a workplace.

Through narratives of three women academics, the findings reveal the lack of core democratic values such as equality, liberty, and justice in the institutional process and campus environment contributing as barriers to women's progress in academia. This paper argues that only providing access to higher education alone is insufficient, and instead, it is imperative to prioritise the Democratisation of institutional processes. To advance these democratic values, re-thinking civic education in higher education has the transformative potential to challenge oppressive systems and promote social equality both within Indian higher education and society as a whole.

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## PERFORMANCE 1

# WHO NEEDS CRITICAL UNIVERSITY STUDIES? AFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN RESEARCH-BASED INTERVENTIONS IN POLICY ENACTMENTS

**Eva Bendix Petersen, Roskilde University, Denmark**

In this reader's theatre I present a cacophonous ethnography exploring an affective practice (Wetherell, 2012) that we might recognise as *impatience*. A cacophonous form of representation highlights complexity, multiplicity, and open-endedness (Petersen, 2016). This feeling or mood appears in various ways in certain research-based interventions in current policy enactments in Danish universities. Specifically, Danish universities are gearing up on student mental well-being initiatives following a global concern with the issue as well as a governmental decision to include student well-being as a performance indicator in its funding model from 2023. Everyone, that is, chief administrators, programme convenors, student support staff, educational developers, academics, etc., are keen to know what to do. For some, the (unacknowledged) question is perhaps how to enhance the institution's performance on the government's measuring tool, the national student experience survey, for others the wish for best or good practice is couched in a strongly felt and openly acknowledged concern for students. Sometimes these may conflate. As part of a research team that investigates critically the mental well-being agenda (e.g. Petersen & Sarauw, 2023) and its accompanying discourses and tools, and subjectifying practices, we are currently invited to give talks or present our research at conferences. We consider our contributions research-based interventions in an intense and multifaceted policy rollout. The performance presents some affective 'episodes' (Wetherell, 2013) in encounters between this critical intervention and the desire to act as a part of a broader investigation of the affective dimensions and implications of engaged HE policy-practice research.

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## Paper 49: Why do social scientists publish? A critical review of motivations and driving forces

**Yusuf I. Oldac, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Victoria Ankrah, Lingnan University, Hong Kong SAR, China**

In the ever-evolving landscape of academia, the “publish or perish” principle is also changing. It still remains a pivotal factor driving researchers to disseminate their work, but it is becoming more nuanced. Positioned as a conceptual research, this study critically reviews and evaluates the existing literature on the motivations and driving forces for the purposes of publishing for social scientists. The preliminary findings of the study identifies two overarching motivations guiding a researcher’s publishing aspirations: intrinsic and extrinsic (cf. Ryan & Deci, 2000). While intrinsic motivation to publish comes from a social scientist’s internal drive, extrinsic motivation is related to factors such as departmental requirements and peer pressure. We argue that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to publish, in turn, differentiate with further subcategories. Specifically, the early findings indicate seven subcategories of driving forces for academic publications among social scientists; arranged along a continuum from the most intrinsically motivated to the most extrinsically motivated. In this continuum, driving forces include passion for writing, contribution to knowledge, maintaining relevance, careerism, promotion regulations, fulfilling institutional requirements, and peer competition. The early findings also indicate that the increase in extrinsic motivations for publications may lead to higher inclinations for publishing in predatory journals. This study underscores the significance of understanding the underlying driving forces leading researchers to publish their work. These provide valuable insights into the dynamics of the academic publishing world and has the potential to explain why predator outlets keep growing (Inouye & Mills, 2021). In a scholarly environment marked by increasing scrutiny and the proliferation of predatory publishing, grasping the interplay between scholars’ motivations and the choice of publication venues is important for ensuring the integrity and impact of academic work. This critical review offers an exploration of this crucial domain, shedding light on the complex driving forces behind the processes social scientists engage in making their publication decisions.



## ROUNDTABLE 7

# UNIVERSITIES AS LIMINAL SPACES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**Jack Tsao, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**  
**Sakinah Alhadad, Griffith University, Australia**

## STUDENTS

This roundtable conversation aims to initiate an incisive deconstruction of the prevailing neoliberal conceptualisation of universities as mere 'knowledge factories' towards a more imaginative vision. Through critical discourse on how universities currently represent student learning and engagement, we hope to have a lively conversation on shifting towards new paradigms of experimentations, improvisation, and potentialities that accommodate more promising futures (Bridgstock 2020). Pushing beyond the transactional view of universities as mere conduits for knowledge transfer, we begin with the proposition that universities are unique, liminal spaces offering transformative experiences for students becoming unavailable elsewhere. Yet, deeply entrenched and historicised neoliberal policies, logic, and practices of higher education institutional ecosystems (Desierto & Maio, 2020; Stein, 2018) often marginalise these experiences, making them accessible or even desirable only to a fraction of the student population. Consequently, these experiences are positioned in the peripheries of the university experiences as extra/co-curricular activities, events, and projects. Student engagement in transformative experiences is often in tension with the pressures of core academic requirements and the growing uncertainty of future employment prospects. The tension is heightened by the emergence of disruptive digital technologies and the perceived devaluation of university education in mitigating the increasing precarity of future work (Williamson & Komljenovic, 2023). In light of this framing, our session poses some critical questions for discussion: How can we prioritise transformative experiences, creativity, character development, well-being, and democratic values within the core university curriculum? What is the teleology of these transformative experiences? How can digital technologies and generative AI as more-than-human actors contribute to this rethinking and reconfiguration? How can we leverage these technologies for international collaborative learning in an equitable way to develop cosmopolitan capacities required for transnational and globalisation mobilities? In alignment with the conference's objectives, this roundtable instigates conversations for a transformative praxis and contributes to envisioning a renewed and alternative future for higher education. Overturning disempowering descriptors of "neoliberal universities" that assume unidirectional causal relationships, we embrace Barnett's (2023) proposition to reconceptualise university's entanglement through a more agential lens. We invite fellow scholars to engage in this critical collective storytelling and futuring exercise to recompose and redefine more hopeful futures (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2022) of university imaginaries that champion educational and societal emancipation, liberation, and good.

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## Paper 15: Navigating the neoliberal academia: An autoethnographic exploration

**Ridita Mizan, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh & Illinois State University, USA**

In this paper, I aim to present an autoethnographic exploration of my experiences of earning credit in English Departments across three distinct cultural contexts – Bangladesh, the UK, and the USA. Critically engaging with the politics of the neoliberal university, I shall examine the university as an experiential landscape shaped by what Barton and Barton call the “Rules of Exclusion and Repression”. Drawing inspiration from critical spatial rhetorics, I will argue that while universities may superficially embrace inclusion, systemically they are tethered to neoliberal ideologies, which are by design exclusionary. Delving into the pedagogical praxes of English Departments in each location, I will discuss how neoliberalism manifests within academia, dictating the experiential landscape for both students and teachers, turning them into mere cogs for the global machinery of the higher educational industry. Grounded in Paulo Freire’s critique of the banking model of education, I will analyse how the neoliberal university shapes individuals through its definition, prioritisation, and framing of “knowledge”, as well as through its systemic structures of educating. Building on McLuhan’s notion that “the medium is the message,” I will demonstrate how the neoliberal university is necessarily about the cultivation of artificial educational demand through the promotion of a cultural cycle of mutual distrust and disrespect. Through the autoethnographic lens of this paper, I will offer perspectives on the experiences I have had in navigating the three distinct cultural and academic environments. Discussing my intersectional identities as an academic belonging to the so-called Third World, I shall provide insights into the impact of neoliberalism on affecting individuals within the academic sphere and shed light on how its dynamics influence the university’s ability to genuinely embrace diversity. I will also explore academic approaches and initiatives aimed at resisting the neoliberal influence and question the effectiveness of these measures in addressing the assault on the university’s core values. Ultimately, through my autoethnographic journey, I hope to contribute to the broader conversation on the changing landscape of higher education, urging a reevaluation of initiatives taken by academics to foster true inclusivity and diversity.

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## Paper 31: Playing the academic game: Resistance, precarity, and university futures

**Bethany Cox, University of Auckland, New Zealand**

Possibilities for remaking universities can be grounded in, proliferated by, and yet also limited through everyday practices of resistance in academic spaces. While the university can be considered as an infinite game and open



to limitless potential futures, the neoliberal and corporate logic underpinning academic practices can render the university as finite (Harré et al, 2017). The highly individualistic and fragmented nature of academia makes possibilities for remaking and reimagining the university feel somewhat limited, where ‘playing the [academic] game’ to progress one’s career and desire for security may indeed be predicated on another’s precarity. Inspired by two quotes from participant interviews (one senior academic and one early career researcher), I want to consider the possibilities for remaking universities, resistance, and rage against the university monolith in the context of academic careers and the relative experiences of precarity. Academics often reinvent themselves “to appear to accommodate with the corporate logic in grants, promotion and institutional demands – a performative exercise” (Blackmore, 2022, p. 100). While the performative exercise of creating such academic identities may be resisted and critiqued by many, consequently, in the tension and pressure to “... ‘get ahead,’ we are inculcated into constant and perpetual self-improvement in the service of the institution’s finite games” (Harré et al, 2017, p. 8). Based on conversations with interview participants, I want to consider the narrative surrounding the contradictions of playing the academic game, while climbing the somewhat infinite academic ladder, and resistance against the status quo of many university spaces.

Senior Academic:

*“There’s the old-fashioned metrics... which is frustrating, but I actually do quite well in those metrics. So, I feel a little bit... I don’t feel completely right using those metrics, but they work well for me to progress my career, if that makes sense. It doesn’t sit super well with me, but I play the game. I guess that’s what I’m saying. But then I feel like I’m playing the game so I can get seniority so I can hopefully have an impact of, you know, influence and changing those spaces.”*

Early Career Researcher:

*“Is your security predicated on somebody else’s precarity? If it is, then I don’t view that as good research leadership.”*

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## Paper 51: Acquiring traditional Chinese knowledge: Generational experiences of Chinese humanities and social sciences scholars amid global knowledge asymmetries

**Yuting Shen, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

This paper provides a tentative study of how Chinese humanities and social sciences (HSS) scholars acquire traditional Chinese knowledge across generations amid global knowledge asymmetries. To address our research question, we interviewed Chinese humanities and social sciences (HSS) scholars, including those from mainland China and overseas communities, born between the 1930s and early 1980s. Through thematic analysis, we identified generational differences in attitudes, purposes, and content of traditional Chinese knowledge acquisition. Participants born in the 1930s to 1950s possessed a solid foundation in traditional Chinese learning, considering it an integral part of their social context. Their learning encompassed



classics and multiple forms of cultural heritage, although they increasingly emphasised modern Western knowledge due to Western influences. In contrast, participants born in the 1960s to early 1980s were shaped by evolving knowledge asymmetries dominated by the Anglo-American West. They grew up during a period where traditional Chinese knowledge held little importance, likely due to Westernisation or anti-tradition movements. Only during the recent two decades have they recognised the importance of reengaging with traditional knowledge. Their extensive pursuit of traditional Chinese knowledge, primarily through studying classics, aims to counteract global knowledge asymmetries and establish an independent knowledge system. Based on these findings, we discuss the implications of variations in the knowledge structures of Chinese HSS scholars over generations, which may represent the dynamic nature of global knowledge asymmetries and the potential for changes to the Western-centric knowledge order (Marginson & Xu, 2023). This dynamism would facilitate Chinese universities to contribute to global knowledge creation and intellectual pluralism (Shen et al., 2023).

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## Paper 64: 'Playing the same game differently': Constituting academic identities in four disciplines

**Mark Barrow, University of Auckland, New Zealand**  
**Linlin Xu, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, China &, University of Auckland, New Zealand**

While many studies have explored academic identity construction, very few take a comparative perspective to examine the various ways of constructing academic identities within and across different disciplines. In this presentation we draw on a key policy document used for evaluating academics' performance along with semi-structured interviews with 37 academics from Chemical Sciences, Medical Sciences, Nursing, and Education to address this shortcoming. The research was conducted in a research-intensive university in Aotearoa New Zealand. We use Foucault's theoretical construct of games of truth to consider the ways in which academics in different disciplines play the academic 'game' and how this might affect the construction of on their academic identity. Our early analysis suggests that the path into academia is a key factor in their trajectory of academic formation. We will attempt to problematise the standardised definition and evaluation of academics and offers contextualised and agential understandings of being and becoming set up through the interplay of forces arising from disciplinary, institutional, professional and personal spheres.

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## Paper 24: “Where am I?”: The Chinese multi-campus university as a deconstruction of students’ sense of belonging

**Huaxin Yang**

Multi-campus Universities have been broadly established since the 1990s in Mainland China, as an action to meet the demands of massification and popularisation of higher education and the national planning for building stronger comprehensive universities. According to the statistics released by the Ministry of Education, up to mid-2020, two-thirds of universities have two campuses, and one-fifth of universities have three or more campuses, among which some have five or more. The majority of multi-campus universities in the mainland constitute one legal entity, one university governance system, and several campus locations, indicating that ‘a campus’ in the Chinese context means ‘one of the locations of the university’. However, in a Western context understanding of this term at institutions can be differently interpreted as an independent branch of the same university, such as the University of California. This mode of multi-campus university means that students stay at different locations while sharing one university system and culture. The unresolved challenges and problems of multi-campus governance renders students’ emotions and values about the university, including the sense of belonging, active participation, cultural acquisition and identification, very challenging, which may influence their learning achievements. The multi-campus universities which hold the promise of providing more young people with higher education of better quality, however, problematises students’ higher education experiences, and may potentially cause inequality among students from different campuses. This proposed study aims to explore students’ sense of belonging, active participation, and cultural acquisition and identification in Chinese multi-campus universities through case study, questionnaire survey, and interview. Informed by the literature of students’ sense of belonging and participation to the university, the study attempts to examine how the multi-campus system influences students’ emotions and values, how the students in different campuses understand their identities in terms of the university, and how their emotions and values influence their learning achievements. The study will focus on the conception of inequality within campus life from the perspective of students. It has important implications for comparative studies on multi-campus university systems, and for the decision-making and problem-solving of multi-campus university governance and leadership.

## Paper 47: The rising influence of international organisations on doctorate governance: towards a Marketisation of doctoral education

**Alexandre Bran, Laboratory of Interdisciplinary studies on the Doctorate, France**

**Matthieu Lafon, Laboratory of Interdisciplinary studies on the Doctorate, France**

Over the last two decades, a notable shift has occurred in the focus on doctoral education: doctoral education has garnered increased attention globally, with international organisations (IOs) such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) playing a significant role. The integration of doctoral education into research policy matters is exemplified by the European Commission (EC). The Bologna Process, aimed at enhancing cooperation between universities, spurred discussions on doctoral education at the international level. Simultaneously,

the European Research Area (ERA), initiated in 2000, contributed to the growth of EC research policies, emphasising social challenges and research excellence. In 2005, the EC's endorsement of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers marked a shift, classifying doctoral candidates as 'Early-Career Researchers' and linking research career policies to doctoral training programs. This change in classification empowered the EC to influence the domain of the doctorate, leading to consistent efforts to establish new doctoral programs, alliances, and increased intersectoral mobility in research. Notably, recent joint initiatives by the EU and OECD in 2023 introduced comprehensive measures promoting research careers, including a European framework for research careers, a Charter for Researchers, and the European Competence Framework for Researchers (ResearchComp). These initiatives emphasise the need for doctoral training programs to align with actual skills needs, indicating a departure from the traditional focus on academic curiosity to a strategic instrument for economic growth. However, the Marketisation of the doctorate is not just a technical framework; it introduces a cognitive dimension, reshaping the perception of the doctorate. While they operate as 'soft law' measures at the international level, prompting emulation and peer evaluation rather than strict harmonisation, their impact on national policies, especially considering diverse policy models and academic cultures, remains a critical issue. This study, employing document analysis, poses inquiries into the transformation of doctoral policies, specifically examining the balance between market relevance and a comprehensive educational approach for doctoral graduates. It encourages an exploration of the role of IOs in disseminating neoliberal policy approaches within higher education and research.

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### Paper 50: Students' experience in intra-country cross-border education: Identity formation in a Hong Kong institution's branch campus

**Xiaofan Zhang, The Chinese University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**  
**Kun Dai, The Chinese University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

While international branch campuses (IBCs) are labeled as "studying abroad without going abroad" (Ou & Gu, 2021), it does not mean that students will easily fit into the context of IBCs. Instead, students seemingly find themselves immersed in a more intricate environment. IBCs strive to provide students with an experience comparable to that of their home institutions, while necessitating adaptation to the local environment where they are established (Wilkins, 2020; Healey, 2015). The interplay between global and local factors is expected to complicate students' learning experience in IBCs. Notably, students tend to develop complex perceptions of their own

identity. For instance, they may contemplate whether they align more with the identity of international students or that of local students, making it an intriguing subject worth exploring. This study examines the identity of students enrolled in the branch campuses of Hong Kong institutions (HKIs) in the Greater Bay Area of Mainland China, which can be called intra-country branch campuses. The experience at HKIs' IBCs is influenced not only by global and local factors but also significantly shaped by national policies, leading to a more complicated process of identity formation for students. Using the framework of identity and global-national-local imbrications, this narrative inquiry explores the identity formation of Chinese students in HKIs' IBCs, considering the influence of contextual factors. Through inductive and deductive analysis, this study highlights the distinct environment of HKIs' IBCs where internationalised educational systems and national educational visions come together within the local campus. In this hybrid space, students navigate through diverse contextual factors, resulting in the formation of a hybrid identity (Marginson, 2014; Phelps, 2016). This study holds practical and theoretical implications. Although HKI's IBC is a unique case, students and educators in other institutions can draw valuable insights from the experiences of students in this study and pursue a more positive self-perception. Furthermore, this study uses the global-national-local imbrications to demonstrate how the contextual factors comprehensively influence the formation of students' identities. It suggests that this concept can effectively facilitate the analysis of the intricate process of students' identity formation in different contexts.

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## Paper 55: Resilience and resourcefulness: Logics of access and survival in transnational medical education for less affluent international students

**Tingting Zhang, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Yabing Liu, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

International student mobility (ISM) is an increasingly significant phenomenon that shapes the landscape of global higher education. Asia and Africa, in particular, play an important role in this trend, with students from these continents venturing across borders in pursuit of broader educational opportunities. While the primary narrative of ISM typically focuses on privileged individuals from elite backgrounds seeking to maximise social advantages through rationalistic strategies, there is an equally intriguing but less discussed subplot. This aspect features students from less affluent backgrounds navigating their way across the transnational academic landscape, for example, most South Asian and African MBBS students at Chinese universities come from non-affluent families in small towns or rural areas, lacking any significant class advantage or elite connections. They face many challenges and obstacles in their pursuit of medical education,

including financial constraints, language barriers, cultural differences, and other factors. This paper aims to cast a spotlight on this underserved aspect, turning its focus towards less privileged South Asian and African students, and their unique journeys pursuing medical education in China. These students, who are often at the fringes of conventional ISM discourse, offer a counter-narrative that challenges established perspectives, and deepens our understanding of the dynamics of ISM. This understanding would contribute meaningfully to the discourse on ISM and offer policy directions that cater to the needs and realities of diverse student populations. The methodology for this study adopts a qualitative approach, oriented towards an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of less affluent South Asian and African students studying medicine in a non-provincial university in China. Primary data for this study was collected through ethnographic fieldwork, which included semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of students from less affluent South Asian and African backgrounds. In addition to interviews, participant observation was employed to gain holistic and contextual understanding of the participants' daily lives. The researcher embedded herself in the environments frequented by the students such as the university campus, student accommodations, and social gatherings. This offered insights into their daily practices, social interactions, and the potential challenges they faced.

## Paper 56: Who's at the wheel?: A case study of university entrance examination reform in Japan

**Mariko Ono, Kyoto University, Japan**

Since the 1990s, Japanese universities have undergone a series of reforms led by the government to keep up with Anglo-American universities (Rappleye, 2023). Studies have shown how the government strengthens its control over universities by offering incentive-led subsidies (Kawano & Poole, 2021). However, a careful evaluation of those reforms indicates, unlike fast-changing Anglo-American universities, Japanese universities seem to change mostly at the peripheral level due to lack of specificity of the policies (Ota, 2018). Some universities even take advantage of this to develop their own interpretation and carry them out. This study describes an example of such practices by focusing on how Kinako university (anonymised) dealt with the introduction of multidimensional and holistic assessments (MHA) in the university entrance examination. The government introduced MHA to assess the qualities and abilities of applicants (Central Council for Education, 2014) to reduce the emphasis on knowledge-oriented examinations. In its policy, the government did not specify the methods nor the structure to conduct MHA, which obviously created confusion among universities. Many universities ended up introducing essays and interviews on top of traditional written examinations, which became an additional burden for the university staff. Simply said, it was not well received. Under these circumstances, Kinako University came up with methods of MHA based on their own interpretation and successfully reformed its entrance examination system. Today, MHA at Kinako University is considered as a model. Why were they able to take the wheel and what was the process? In this case study, I focus on three university members who played significant roles when introducing MHA at Kinako University. I interviewed them with the following questions; (1) what kind of MHA practices did they implement? (2) how did they interpret MHA into practices?, and (3) what was the process of implementation like? I used an organisation learning theory, the 4I framework by Crossan et al. (1999), to analyse the interviews and documents. The results revealed how these three university members developed their ideas and strategies based on their professional knowledge and skills rather than resorting to the narratives policy makers offered.

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## Paper 59: Decoding the 'problem' in Taiwan's SoTL policy: A poststructural exploration

**Hung-Chang Chen, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan, China**

This study conducts a critical policy analysis of Taiwan's higher education system, with a specific focus on the Teaching Practice Research Program (TPRP), an innovative policy for higher education teaching. The primary objective is to scrutinise the problem representations within this nationwide Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) initiative (Boyer, 1990; Tight, 2018). The research unfolds through three key inquiries: (1) identifying issues framed as 'problems' in the policy, (2) revealing underlying assumptions shaping the problem representation, and (3) examining the effects emanating from this representation. Adopting Carol Bacchi's 'What is Represented as Problems' (WPR) approach (Bacchi, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), the methodology employs practical texts, encompassing policy documents, interviews with key policy figures, speeches, and media statements. The findings underscore the TPRP policy's framing of the 'academic's teaching problem' within the broader context of a 'scholarship reward system.' Formerly dominated by disciplinary research, this system now discerns between 'pedagogical research' and 'disciplinary research,' signifying a pivotal shift in the equilibrium between teaching and research. The study posits that the TPRP policy establishes a hierarchy of teaching activities, wherein only SoTL research qualifies for recognition, sidelining alternative forms of teaching practices (Kern et al., 2015). This hierarchical discourse exerts influence across both the policy domain and the reward system, inadvertently pressuring academics to augment publications, thereby risking burnout and heightened competing obligations (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018). Implications arising from the research underscore the latent tensions between publishing and teaching within the TPRP (SoTL-informed) policy (Macfarlane, 2011). Recommendations advocate for a recalibration of how SoTL is approached in the East Asian context, emphasising the requisite consideration of cultural nuances and the translation of SoTL into diverse academic settings (Hoon & Looker, 2013). In conclusion, this study identifies the 'academic's teaching problem' nested within the broader milieu of academic reward systems, providing a foundation for discourse hierarchy. The TPRP policy, in unintended consequence, amplifies the pressure on academics to publish, thereby incurring potential ramifications. The research makes a substantial contribution to critical policy analysis, advocating for a reassessment of the intricate relationship between publishing and teaching within the TPRP policy regime.

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## Paper 62: Unveiling conflict in Syrian higher education – academics' perspectives and informal management processes

**Fatima Alhaj Hasan, University of Warwick, UK**

Organisational conflict is a natural aspect of the interactions in all institutions, including universities. Certain characteristics of academic culture make conflict seemingly inevitable among academics. These characteristics include democratic decision making and shared governance which permeate academic thinking, the high degree of autonomy and independent-mindedness that academics usually have, and the value placed on free thought leading to engaging in debates openly and pursuing opposing arguments forcefully (Berryman-Fink, 1998). In this presentation, I share early findings from a wider research study investigating academics' experiences of organisational conflict. I engage with data generated out of a mixed-methods study—involving semi-structured interviews and solicited diaries—which sought to understand the complex nature of conflicts among academics in Syrian HEIs. The interviews explore academics' overarching experiences with organisational conflict, while diaries delve into the nuanced details of daily conflict interactions. Participants highlighted several causes of conflict, including jealousy, favouritism based on personal and political affiliations, management practices, and disagreements over academic standards and student performance. Notably, the majority of conflicts were informally addressed due to the absence of well-defined formal procedures. Academics tended to address conflicts independently, often hesitating to involve heads of departments or other administrators. This reluctance was mostly influenced by their sense of autonomy and desire to maintain collegiality. While these findings align with the prevalent scholarly discourse advocating for informal conflict management for the sake of collegiality (Rieger, 1999), an alternative perspective emerges. Mirroring Ahmed's (2021) arguments, the absence of clearly defined formal procedures could be viewed as universities perpetuating the status quo through nonperformative processes that lack transformative impact. Consequently, this calls for a more profound exploration into the role and efficacy of informal conflict management procedures in HEIs, questioning whether they are simply nonperformative, a concept put forward by Ahmed (2021).

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## Paper 10: The university's missing: Grief, loss and mourning in the UK university

**Felicity Callard, University of Glasgow, UK**

My paper contributes to the field of critical university studies by offer an account of 'the missing', both in the university and in our dominant accounts of it. This draws from a larger research project on the UK university sector from 2018 to the present. 2018 marked the start of an ongoing and sustained period of industrial action that has, I argue, significantly changed the UK university, both materially and psychically. Central to those changes are significant, and largely unremarked/unacknowledged loss. 'The missing' include those lost through redundancies; the disappearing of secure academic positions that mean that many are never able to acquire a position in the academy; the closing of departments; the deaths and long-term illness caused by COVID; and the killing of colleagues and collaborators through war. 'The missing' remain largely invisible in most formal and dominant accounts of the early twenty-first century UK university. The paper argues that while it remains uncommon across disciplines to understand the university through the phenomena of grief and mourning – addressing these phenomena ought to be central to critical university studies' understandings of what a university is and how it might be transformed. Attending to loss, grief and mourning opens out other temporal and spatial logics through which to understand the body of the university; it also offers new means of understanding epistemic and disciplinary change. The paper is interdisciplinary in its use of methods and conceptual architecture: I analyse a variety of materials produced during industrial action that, I argue, provided dissident anatomies of what the UK university is and how it functions; outline a growing repertoire of 'bottom-up' practices of commemoration and memorialisation that challenge the formal university's inability or refusal to grieve or to acknowledge loss; and analyse how university workers' writings and public pronouncements concerning the university exemplify changing relationships to the university as institution, and to the role of the 'academic'.

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## Paper 12: Academic health and wellbeing in Taiwanese universities: A job demands-resources perspective

**Sheng-Ju Chan, National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan, China**

Globally, higher education institutions have faced pressure from market-driven globalisation forces and increasing demands for efficiency and accountability for two decades. Consequently, it is crucial to examine how the health and wellbeing of academics have been affected by the rising academic productivity and competition. Utilising the job demands-resources (JD-R) model as a theoretical framework, this study aims to explore the institutional, organisational, and work-related factors influencing the health and wellbeing outcomes of academics in Taiwan. This research

addresses not only academics' health and wellbeing but also a relatively understudied cultural context: East Asia. The study employed a cross-sectional survey methodology to collect data from a population of 3,524 randomly selected Taiwanese academics, with a final sample size of 552 respondents. An online questionnaire was utilised to gather information on Taiwanese academics' personal and institutional backgrounds, job roles, work-life balance, institutional characteristics, productivity, and physical and psychological health and wellbeing, as measured by the Copenhagen Psychological Questionnaire II. Data collection occurred from October to December of 2021. Findings from the survey indicate that high academic requirements have adversely affected the work-life balance of Taiwanese academics. More than half of the sampled academics rated their health as average to poor, with many experiencing physical and emotional exhaustion. Specific discomforts reported include difficulties sleeping and early waking without returning to sleep. These findings highlight the stressful and exhausting nature of academic work. Through the lens of the JD-R model, the study identifies various job demands and resources present in the Taiwanese academic work environment. While academics benefit from high autonomy, time flexibility, and support within their working environment, conflicting job roles and extensive time commitments contribute to emotional and physical exhaustion. The study suggests that addressing these job demands can help improve the academic work environment in Taiwan, providing policymakers with valuable insights for intervention and improvement initiatives.

## Paper 26: The inadequate subject and the illiberal university

**Julian Castano Gallego, University of Auckland/Waipapa Taumata Rau, New Zealand**

Although spaces that foster education may imply a sense of being together, of community, a hierarchical relation between those who educate and the ones who learn is almost inescapable. This position seems almost always determined by a 'limit to knowledge', an imagined line demarcated by the pedagogue who knows and the pupil who is yet to know. This is particularly salient in the liberal university, a site whereby knowledge becomes something to be imparted and more importantly, measured. I propose that we dismantle the position of the pedagogue as the all-knowing subject. This, I argue, could be achieved if we critically analyse the place of the pedagogue in a liberal university via two ideas, namely: Jacques Lacan's notion of the 'subject supposed to know'; and second, Baruch de Spinoza's conception of the inadequacy of the subject, applied to the pedagogue. These two points of analysis will help us demonstrate that a progressive account of the pedagogue in a liberal university is untenable, especially if we are to consider the possibility of doing away with hierarchical relations. This is because the one who teaches is always counted as an individual, an insular subject who needs to spouse a position of completeness in contradistinction to others. This is not only impossible for the subject as pedagogue to sustain, it is also a great cause of anxiety. The aim of this presentation is to demonstrate that knowledge can never be entirely attained at the level of the individual, but also, to emphasise that for a relational pedagogy to fully flourish, the liberal university must be called into question.

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## Paper 28: Care and community in the academy: the role of retreats

**Kathryn Sutherland, Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand**

**Kate Schick, Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand**

**Rhian Salmon, Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand**

Academia is a highly sought after profession that, for many of us, is deeply rewarding—we find joy and meaning in our research, in educating and learning with our students, and in scholarly conversations. However, the lived experience of academia is often at odds with the vision of scholarly life that attracted us to academia. Universities are increasingly marked by a commitment to efficient performance and measurement of outputs, and the ensuing ‘counting culture’ (Mountz et al. 2015, 1243) pervades our everyday (Sutherland 2018). In the ‘high speed university’ (Ylijoki 2013), time is scarce and scholars are often exhausted—an exhaustion that is writ large on our bodies (Acker and Armenti 2004; Mountz et al. 2015, 1245–46; Phipps 2010, 46–47) and that works against academic joy. In this presentation, we explore one method for recovering joy in academia—through academic retreats marked by community and care. For several years now, we have run residential academic retreats in beautiful rural environments and we have observed the powerful ways that these can interrupt academia-as-usual, giving the gift of time in the context of care and embodied practice. We argue that retreats can function as a restorative space that provides the opportunity to rest as well as to create. By slowing time, academic retreats allow participants to connect more with themselves as well as one another, and to re-encounter their research in different ways. The presentation will have two parts. In part one, we will discuss ‘the academy at speed’ (Authors, 2024) and the way that the temporal dimensions of contemporary academia foster a sense of lack that works against academic wellbeing. In part two, we will explore resistance to the temporal regimes of the contemporary academy via the cultivation of a *slower* academy that prioritises the whole person, not just the productive neoliberal subject. By proffering the gift of time and supporting the whole person—body, mind and spirit—our care-full retreats interrupt the ‘high speed university’ and create space for the rediscovery of pleasure and joy in the context of community and care.

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## SYMPOSIUM 1

# THE ROLE OF BIBLIOMETRICS IN ACADEMIC REWARD AND RECOGNITION SYSTEMS IN EAST ASIAN UNIVERSITIES: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

**Futao Huang, Hiroshima University, Japan**

**Gerard A. Postiglione, The University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Jisun Jung, The University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Angela Yung Chi Hou, National Chengchi University,  
Taiwan, China**

**J.C. Shin, Seoul National University, South Korea**

**Bruce Macfarlane (Chair), The Education University of Hong  
Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

Universities need to assess academic research performance in order to make rational and fair decisions in respect to appointments, contract renewal, tenure and promotion. The criteria used to make such decisions is critical to academic careers and shapes scholarly behaviour in order to meet such expectations. In recent years there has been increasing use of bibliometrics for assessing academic research performance (eg citation counts, Scopus and/or Google Scholar *h*-indexes, and journal impact factor or JIF). These proxy measurements of academic quality do not involve direct evaluation of the quality of publications through peer review and the majority of scientometricians regard the JIF as an unreliable measure of academic quality. Reliance on metrics has distorting effects and encourages gaming behaviour discouraging scholarship that attracts less citations (eg researching less popular, emerging or niche sub-fields, using novel or innovative methodologies, and publishing in a language other than English.) Journals editors are also encouraged by publishers to boost the journal JIF through, among other things, increasing the number of special issues. Academics in the humanities and social sciences now publish more in journals rather than books (or in book chapters) and enter into larger co-authoring relationships sometimes as a gaming strategy to boost citation counts and *h*-index. These are some of the distorting behavioural effects of reliance on bibliometrics to evaluate academic research influencing both what academics research and *how* they publish their results.

Across East Asia, and internationally, there are significant differences in reliance on bibliometrics to evaluate research quality. Some leading institutions and influential funding bodies, such as the UK Wellcome Trust, firmly oppose bibliometrics, especially the JIF. The Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, see <https://sfidora.org/>) signed by a number of major world universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, UCL London, and Melbourne, asserts that research should be evaluated on its own merits rather than by reference to the journal in which it is published. Yet, while 90 universities in the UK and many more in mainland Europe are signatories to this agreement only one East Asian university (ie The University of Hong Kong) is publicly committed to the DORA principles. This symposium will provide an opportunity for leading scholars from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South

Korea to compare policy across East Asian contexts in respect to the use of bibliometrics and to reflect critically on their use and effects.

### **Paper 1: Congeniality and research productivity**

**Gerard A. Postiglione & Jisun Jung, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

This study situates research productivity with academic collegiality. With a concern about the effect of contemporary bibliometric pressures on collegiality, it examines how the two are associated across higher education systems. A majority of the literature has grouped influential factors of research productivity into two broad categories: individual-level characteristics and institutional features. For example, job satisfaction or stress at the individual level and academic freedom, shared governance, and a supportive research environment at the institutional level are positively related to research productivity. Our study combines the favorable conditions that enhance research productivity among academics, both at individual and institutional levels. In particular, we conceptualised congeniality as situations that are suitable to one's professional inclinations and circumstances, and are beneficial to the academic profession. We have hypothesised that the relationship between congeniality and research productivity varies across higher education systems, based on whether they are market-driven, professorial-driven, or state-driven. Our data draws from the three international surveys of the academic profession.

### **Paper 2: Global collaborations or local competitions among top researchers in Taiwan higher education? Exploring reward policy, research productivity and collaboration modes**

**Angela Yung Chi Hou, National Chengchi University, Taiwan, China**

Global research universities are now under pressure to attract top-notch international researchers as well as retain their most competitive talents domestically. The Ministry of Education Taiwan has developed a global talent recruitment initiative entitled the "Yushan Project" to attract talent by offering internationally competitive salaries and benefits while the Outstanding Research Award of the National Science and Technology Council of Taiwan is a means of rewarding and retaining highly productive researchers in Taiwan's universities. The purpose of the paper is to explore the recruitment policy and reward system of the Yushan project and the Outstanding Research Award in Taiwan. The research productivity of the awardees of these two programs between 2018 to 2023 is analysed via a bibliometric approach. Based on this comparison of these two programs the paper will present an evaluation of the awardees' academic performances and their modes of collaboration.

### **Paper 3: Navigating academic priorities in Japanese universities**

**Futao Huang, Hiroshima University, Japan**

This study analyses the responses of Japanese faculty members to a critical survey question from two national surveys offering comparative data by university type (research-intensive vs. teaching-oriented), academic discipline (hard sciences vs. soft sciences), and generational differences (junior vs. senior) between 2007 to 2017. The study aims to unravel the

complex influences on faculty hiring and promotion decisions in Japan and investigates how universities with differing orientations approached faculty evaluation amidst the growing global use of bibliometrics. By dissecting the data, the study reveals the intricate factors that shaped faculty members' strategies in response to evolving expectations. The study provides a nuanced examination of Japan's academic landscape, offering insights into the interplay of bibliometrics, institutional categorisations, academic fields, and generational perspective.

#### **Paper 4: Metricisation of academic performance in South Korea: Bibliometrics as the proxy measure of research performance and its side effects**

**Jung Cheol Shin, Seoul National University, South Korea**

Metric data especially bibliometric data enables the academic community to be transformed from a parochial to a meritocratic society in South Korea. This transformation was enabled with the competition-based research funding which launched by the Korea Government in the late 1990s. The representative funding project is the Brain Korea 21 project which started its first funding project in 1999 and sustaining during last three decades. However, this longstanding funding project accompanies serious side effects. One of representative side effect is that it narrowly defines quality by the metric data and academics and graduate students are buried in the games of metrics. This study analyses how the academic performance is institutionalised three levels of higher education stakeholders from state policy level, to organisational level (institutional and academic unit levels), and individual academics and graduate student levels. Finally, this study analyses how the use of metric data distorts academic activities of faculty members and graduate students.



## SYMPOSIUM 5

# THE MESO-LEVEL AS COLLECTIVE SCHOLARSHIP: UNDOING THE NEOLIBERAL LOGIC OF THE UNIVERSITY

**Tai Peseta, University of Western Sydney, Australia**

**Jeanette Fyffe, Deakin University, Australia**

**Tracy Fortune, La Trobe University, Australia**

**John Hannon, La Trobe University, Australia**

The focus for this symposium is the institutional meso-level, understood as a shared space where academics interact and organise their knowledge networks – a commons, market or square (Roxa 2015). It is the space within the university where scholarship and disciplinary knowledge is sustained and nurtured, or transformed and refashioned. The centrality of the meso-level to academic work invites inquiry into collective scholarly practices that cross boundaries that mark organisational hierarchies and corporatised enclaves. The turn to neoliberalism in universities has delivered radical and pervasive forms of technocratic governance. The effects are increasing precarity or the ‘uberfication’ of the workforce, leaving academics with diminished agency and capacity for scholarly work, and arguably forcing them to seek refuge in ‘bolt-holes and breathing spaces’ (Webb 2018). Neoliberal logic heralds Richard Hall’s ‘The Hopeless University’ unless we find ways to build Raewyn Connell’s ‘Universities of Hope’. In this symposium we decline the invitation to defeatism and inquire into the potential for the meso-level to reveal cracks in the logic of neoliberal governance. This meso-level approach focuses on enactments of collective scholarship and innovative pedagogies that cross institutional and disciplinary boundaries and potentially revive and develop alternative discourses of knowledge within the university.

NEOLIBERALISM

81

## **Paper 1: Tending wounds, energising and finding hope in the mesospace**

**Tracy Fortune, La Trobe University, Australia**

**Jeanette Fyffe, Deakin University, Australia**

Universities as knowledge factories, just like actual factories, are sites of OH&S risk, as real to academics as to those on the factory floor. Risk factors can bubble away silently – self-doubt about our worth as measured against rubbery KPIs; or loudly – the personal and collective fall out of restructures, casualisation, and rationalisation of course structures. Increasingly, tenured academics who once infused their classroom teaching with the findings of their scholarship in subjects that they coordinated, now procure and manage a sizable army of precarious casuals. Once a law lecturer, now a teaching administrator. The rigours of the modern academy are bruising and in some instances brutalising (Hall, 2020). An idea that we are exploring, is that of the *wounded academic*. Whether inflicted by the university, the scars of prior experience or pre-existing conditions, wounded academics need care. Like wounded healers who tend their wounds through therapeutic service to others, wounded academics find and create breathing spaces (Webb, 2018) or heterotopias (Foucault, 1967) by deploying their tools of pedagogy and scholarship. Whether as a form of academic primary prevention for those new



to the academy, or as healing asylum for the wounded to recoup, regroup and mobilise collective scholarly potential – such spaces, allow identification and acknowledgement of the threats to our academic wellbeing alongside engaging in what captures our hearts and minds. We briefly share how we created a heterotopic space for students and ourselves that provided a vital breathing space for those of us who were unknowingly wounded (Fortune, Barradell & Fyffe, 2023).

## **Paper 2: Conflict at the meso-level: Collective scholarship and neoliberal management**

**John Hannon, La Trobe University, Australia**

Decades of neoliberal logic within university governance have left academic workers exhausted and 'wounded', scholarship constrained and often precarious. Academic practice is routinely subject to regimes of compliance that frame practice in terms of individual performance, primed with implicit penalties. Missing in this atomised framing are the inherent 'care' demands that confer an ethical dimension to academic practice: care of student learning, of discipline research and scholarship, and of career progress. This institutional view of practice limits the perspective and capacity to engage in critique of neoliberal forms of governance and decision-making. A contrasting approach to academic practice views the university from the meso-level rather than organisational and disciplinary hierarchies. In this presentation I adopt the concept of assemblage (Bacevic 2018) to understand the meso-level of the university not as a coherent entity but as an organisation always in process, always re-aligning its disparate elements and competing interests. The meso-level offers a view into how specific assemblages are negotiated and provisionally aligned. I argue that a focus on the meso-level offers ways to counter neoliberal logics by attending to forms of collective scholarship: first, practices that cross institutional and disciplinary boundaries can inspire fresh alliances and collectivities (Dillon 2008), second, enabling an analysis of decision-making that constrains scholarly endeavours, and finally, it offers an ethical approach and discourse oriented to care of the university, both as institution and as a powerful and enduring idea.

## **Paper 3: Remaking doctoral supervision as a meso-level practice for collective research communities: Examples and provocations**

**Jeanette Fyffe, Deakin University, Australia**  
**Tai Peseta, Western Sydney University, Australia**

Leaning on Roxa and Martensson's (2015) notion of micro-cultures as a way of apprehending relations of trust, significance, and development at the meso-level of universities, we crack open the practice of doctoral supervision by revisiting the borders of its recognisability. While doctoral supervision is now routinely understood as a practice that involves a supervisor-student dyad, a student and a supervisory team, as taking place within research group settings, and in some cases, across institutions, we aim to ask, what else might doctoral supervision do and be? How might we understand it as inhabiting a 'possibility-space' that is more distributed and embeds a collective commitment to a practice of institutional care intended to animate the meso-level? And we ask, why might we want to? In this paper, we offer examples of routine research practices that might be re-named and re-oriented as instances of collective doctoral supervision, and that



also address a prevailing concern about the lack of intellectual climate for researchers, especially in Australian universities. One case is an Away Day for Supervisors, and the other is, #thesisthinkers – a cross-institutional approach to supporting doctoral researchers and supervisors together. With these two cases, the availability of close-up supervision remains focused on the student's project, but in addition, they can also be considered practices of stewardship (Golde and Walker, 2006) where care for researchers is explicit, alongside a disposition or gaze that includes care for the future of the field. We understand this way of thinking about doctoral supervision as a commitment to 'the commons' – a more intentional and expansive approach to supervision at the meso-level that requires planning, resources, and forms of accountability that might turn us from rage to responsibility and recognition.

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## SYMPOSIUM 2

# INTELLECTUAL LEADERS AND AXIOLOGICAL DILEMMAS: HARBINGERS OR HOSTAGES OF CRISES?

**Bruce Macfarlane, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Hugo Horta, The University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Jisun Jung, The University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Anatoly V. Oleksiyenko (Chair), The Education University of  
Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

As a topic of enquiry, “intellectual leadership” has been evolving in higher education over the last decade (e.g., Macfarlane, 2011; Macfarlane & Chan, 2014; Uslu & Welch, 2018). The initial conceptualisation manifested an attempt to uncover, and perhaps recover, a form of leadership that was largely neglected by the neoliberal economy focused on formal designation of managerial responsibilities through the ever closer application of business principles and practices (Lazarsfeld & Thielens, 1958; Rayner, Fuller, McEwen & Roberts, 2010; Evans, Homer & Rayner, 2013; Žydžiūnaitė, 2018). Publications on intellectual leadership stimulated thinking about the leadership style, which, by contrast, helps to inspire, challenge and nurture communities of learners through the persuasiveness of ideas, collegial care, and service to society. These previous studies pointed out that nobody is actually an intellectual leader by dint of their job title although it might be reasonably expected that many are drawn from the ranks of a university’s senior professorship as several researchers have suggested (e.g., Evans, Macfarlane and Uslu). Instead, intellectual leadership is determined by who has the best ideas or is the most inspirational thinker contributing to their communities and society at large (Oleksiyenko and Ruan, 2019) rather than holding the most powerful position in the formal hierarchy. While the research in this area has encouraged the field to think of intellectual leadership as an informal and distributed network of influences that define the power of ideas and their contribution to society, the daily routine of a modern university urged university professors to dedicate a significant amount of their time and effort to structuralist-functionalist responsibilities (Uslu & Welch, 2018; Oleksiyenko & Ruan, 2019; Uslu, 2020). The investigations in the field are driven by inward-looking hierarchical positionalities that are viewed as needed for improvement of quality and transparency in academic research, teaching and learning. While societal changes appear as justifying the structuration of universities, programs and studies, the ethos of academic inquiry and learning— i.e., creative intellectual exploration determined by the agency of a researcher— is frequently overlooked in the current studies and practice in the field of higher education. In the most difficult times for their societies and institutions, the roles of intellectuals in creating impactful frameworks for inquiry and learning that would address critical crises are rarely discussed and thus barely understood. This panel will examine the axiological issues of leadership in higher education during times of super-complexity, as defined by Barnett (2000), during which academic leadership is increasingly challenged by the choice and conflict of values amidst growing uncertainty

and disparate crises. Communities of research and practice need inspiration from idea-makers who can fuse disparate streams of knowledge production and reconcile competing interests and expectations of stakeholders for problem-solving and meaningful actions. The transgression of boundaries for scientific purposes is often entangled in super-complex ethical dilemmas while academic publicity is questioned and challenged by conflicting groups of interest. While the prestige economy of higher education shapes problematic “emoscapes” (Shahjahan, Sonneveldt, Estera & Bae, 2022) and throws academics and managers into pursuit of disparate rankings and the glorification of bibliometrics, the investigation of controversial dilemmas or misconceived notions of academic duties is often shunned or avoided. The panel will include three presentations as briefly outlined below. Following a 15-minute presentation on each paper, the chair of this panel (Professor Anatoly V. Oleksiyenko) will open the floor for questions and comments, and will facilitate a follow-up discussion.

**Bruce Macfarlane** will explore the effects of the ‘metrics mania’ in East Asia where many universities have fully embraced the use of publication metrics as a means of evaluating academic staff performance resulting in an industrial model of knowledge production and other corrupting impacts including gratuitous multiple authorship and the STEMification of the humanities and social sciences. Facing the dilemmas of competitive publications, the intellectuals are often torn by utilities of communal service and academic egoism. Intellectual leadership emerges as a major ethical position to reinforce the former and downplay the latter.

**Jisun Jung** and **Hugo Horta** will investigate the problems of intellectual leadership at major journals of higher education, while taking an opportunity to problematise peer review, which is often perceived as a vital element of academic citizenship that maintains international publication standards. Having discussed previously the crisis of peer review, caused by the neoliberal pressures of research performance subjugating academic labour, the authors look into the roles and responsibilities of editors as intellectual leaders.

**Anatoly Oleksiyenko** and **Giorgi Tavadze** will examine and compare problems of intellectual leadership in post-soviet knowledge production and academic citizenship. Delving into dilemmas faced by senior scholars in Georgia and Ukraine, who often struggle between the processes of de-Sovietisation and the European re-integration of their universities, this paper will seek to reconceptualise major confrontations between the neoliberal and decolonial values in the post-Soviet higher education. To advance the ideas of institutional resilience and de-bureaucratisation of post-soviet academia, the authors engage with qualitative research data and use a reflexive scholarly dialogue for advancement of “multiple agoras” that investigate the problems of managerialism and challenge totalitarian thinking.

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#### *SYMPOSIUM 4*

## A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT POLICIES, CULTURAL NATIONALISM, AND MARKETISATION IN CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATION

**Han Xiao Ivy, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Lin Cong Jason, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Xiong Weiyan, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

This symposium critically interrogates the prevailing dynamics shaping the higher education landscape in China and Hong Kong, with a focus on employment policies, cultural nationalism, and marketisation. The first presentation challenges the common belief that graduates act as rational economic agents, questioning the underlying assumptions of China's employment policies. Utilising a poststructural interview analysis, the presentation sheds light on the complex subjectivities of graduates and the discourse conflicts that affect their identities in the face of neoliberalism, authoritarianism, and socialism. The second presentation explores the pervasive influence of cultural nationalism on China's higher education. By examining its historical development and current resurgence under President Xi Jinping's regime, this presentation highlights the contested nature of education in the midst of competing cultural ideologies and the fight for ideological dominance. The final presentation points out the potential issues arising from the rapid expansion of self-financed taught postgraduate programs in Hong Kong's public universities. It emphasises the tension between the neoliberal drive for economic sustainability and the essential goal of delivering quality education and calls for policy reforms to address possible quality concerns. Together, these presentations offer a critical perspective on the complex forces shaping the higher education landscape in China and Hong Kong and advocate for an in-depth discussion on Chinese higher education. In addition, this symposium aims to showcase the interaction between global neoliberal ideologies and the traditions and nationalism of Chinese higher education for international audiences.

### **Paper 1: Neither Rational nor Irrational: Graduates' subjective perceptions of China's employment policies**

**Han Xiao, Ivy, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

Graduate employment policies always treat individuals as rational economic maximisers during the decision-making process. However, an increasing number of research illustrate that in the labor market, neither the decision made by employees nor employers is completely objective or rational. From the prism of Foucault, such a hypothesis follows the essentialism understanding of human beings, considering them as being instead of becoming. Empirically based upon the graduates' interpretation and perception towards national employment policies in China, this study adopts a poststructural interview analysis (PIA) to explore how such subjectivity has been shaped (and transformed), which discursive practices could be identified as relevant to such construction of the subject, and what norms involved

during this process. In other words, instead of considering the interviewees as privileged in accessing certain kinds of “truth” about their experiences, PIA’s attention is concentrated on the depersonalisation or politicisation of the personhood of the respondents. Specifically, it focuses on the discursive conflict in Chinese society, for example, the co-existence and incompatibility of neoliberalism, authoritarianism, socialism, etc., and how these discourses struggle with each other for the status of dominance in policy documents to produce the desirable subjecthood.

## **Paper 2: Cultural nationalism and its effects on higher education**

**Lin Cong, Jason, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

What can Chinese culture borrow from Western culture, and how can China borrow it without destroying what is typically (if not exclusively) Chinese? This question has accompanied China’s higher education development since the First Opium War (1839–1842). This paper uses cultural nationalism as a theoretical framework to examine how political leaders across different eras have responded to this challenge. This paper first explores the concept of cultural nationalism, elaborating on its meaning in the Chinese context. By reviewing historical texts and the government’s discourse on higher education from 1840 to 2021, this paper shows that cultural nationalism has been a driving force of the reforms in Chinese higher education throughout this period, although the forms that cultural nationalism has taken have varied. This paper focuses on President Xi Jinping’s approach to the dilemma since taking office in 2012 and explores how it relates to and differs from the approaches of his predecessors. This paper argues that today’s China is witnessing a revival of strong cultural nationalism that is likely to increasingly influence the development of higher education in terms of teaching and research in the future. By showing that cultural nationalism motivates and shapes the development of higher education with Chinese characteristics, this paper has implications for educators and researchers in Chinese higher education institutions.

## **Paper 3: “Cash cow” or quality education provider: A critical review of self-financed taught postgraduate programs at Hong Kong public universities**

**Xiong Weiyan, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

The widespread adoption of economic rationality in the higher education sector due to neo-liberal globalisation has led to the marketisation of public universities globally. The market-driven self-financed taught postgraduate (TPg) programs have grown rapidly in Hong Kong’s public higher education over the past years. These programs cater to both local and international postgraduate students and play a crucial role in the financial sustainability of universities. However, concerns have arisen about the quality of education provided by these market-driven programs. One major concern is the university’s capacity to keep up with the rapid expansion of these TPg programs. Therefore, this study conducts a critical review of the development of TPg programs across eight University Grants Committee-funded universities in Hong Kong, with a focus on quality management. Through reflecting on the marketisation trend in higher education, this study aims to provide suggestions for improving TPg program quality and policy recommendations for managing self-financed postgraduate programs in Hong Kong.

**ROUNDTABLE 4**

# EVALUATING AND CRITICALLY RE-THINKING **HYBRID AND REMOTE WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION: LESSONS LEARNED AFTER COVID-19**

**Roy Y. Chan, Lee University, USA**

The world of work has changed over the past couple of years, but how has this impacted the higher education sector? This roundtable session will explore the rapid rise of remote and hybrid work during and after the global COVID-19 pandemic and what it means for the 'hopeful futures' in Hong Kong and overseas. Today, colleges and universities worldwide must ensure that they have adequate information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, equipment, and systems to adapt to the new normal post-COVID-19. Hybrid and remote work can be a source of boosting productivity and advancing institutional change in tertiary education. Common within the management and leadership literature, hybrid and remote work is an understudied phenomenon in higher education administration. This roundtable session will take a critical perspective on the current and future state of hybrid and remote work in international higher education. Specifically, this roundtable discussion will examine the effects of hybrid and remote work on academic faculty, staff, and students after COVID-19, paying special attention to lessons learned in East Asia and the Pacific. Prior to the global pandemic, hiring international professors, practitioners, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows involved simply managing contracts and obtaining visas. Today, practitioners, policymakers and faculty members have begun to accept that hiring remote and hybrid employees is the new normal, and has become crucial to improving the quantity and quality of international talent in universities. Using the author's book, *Rethinking Hybrid and Remote Work in Higher Education: Global Perspectives, Policies, and Practices after COVID-19* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), this community of practice session will provide attendees with recommendations and resources to consider when evaluating and "critically re-thinking" distance work policies after COVID-19. A complimentary digital copy of the book will be provided to all attendees in this session.

**Guiding Questions for Roundtable Discussion:**

1. How can hybrid or remote work accelerate current academic policies, procedures, or initiatives in Hong Kong's tertiary institutions?
2. What academic programs and services (e.g., virtual office hours, virtual breakout rooms, virtual lecture recordings, virtual study sessions) can faculty members and practitioners adopt to improve practices of teaching, research, and service?
3. How can hybrid or remote work improve productivity and accountability among faculty and staff members in higher education?



## Paper 67: Is “good enough” enough? The problems of asking for academic excellence at a high-status university with an aversion to change

**Susan Rowland, University of Sydney, Australia**

In 2023, as the University of Sydney was ranked 19th in the world in the QS World University Rankings, we embarked on the Academic Excellence Program. This multi-year project aims to uplift our performance by clarifying and honouring diverse academic career pathways and expectations, while also mapping and improving our staff support offerings. The program is led by the Office of the Provost and DVC. In response to a low-trust, highly-unionised environment, the University chose to engage staff in a year-long co-design process. The goal of the co-design is to co-develop core components of the framework – the activity expectations Framework itself, and an evidence menu with standards for excellent achievement in these activities. As the co-design progresses, we find ourselves as a University community, exploring the uncomfortable nexus between performance expectations, performance management, academic self-determination, and staff support. We ask ourselves questions around how to communicate good intentions in an environment permeated by suspicion and historical disappointment. We have also encountered an unexpectedly timid sense from some staff that excellence is not an achievable standard in an excellent university, and that “good enough” should be enough. This challenge from staff raises foundational questions about excellence. What is it? How do we measure it without creating perverse incentives? To what do we compare it? In what domains should it exist? How do we nuance it for staff in different career pathways? What level of excellence can a university expect of its staff, and what must it promise to provide in support of that expectation? How can we define “Academic Excellence” so that it best creates value for staff, the University, and its stakeholders? In this paper I open a conversation with the audience about our learnings around academic excellence in a university that is nominally excellent, but culturally averse to discussions around change and uplift. We will, together, address some of the questions raised in this abstract, drawing on literature and the lived experiences of the participants.

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## Paper 58: Decoding a decade: A bibliometric analysis on the global research trajectory of international doctoral students

**Yabing Liu, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Tingting Zhang, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

Over the past decade, the internationalisation of higher education has emerged as a prominent trend, significantly influencing international student mobility worldwide. International doctoral students (IDS) are a growing population among international students; IDS have garnered considerable attention for their role in driving innovation, fostering intercultural understanding, and advancing academic excellence globally. A large body of literature has been dedicated to investigating IDS-related issues. However, a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on IDS is still lacking. This study aims to fill this gap by systematically analysing the global research landscape of IDS studies. Using bibliometric analysis and the Web of Science as our dataset, we examine trends in publications, key authors, influential journals, geographic distribution by countries and institutions, and major research themes within IDS studies over the past decade. The study examines publications written about international doctoral students (IDS) and international doctoral education using keyword co-occurrence as a basis for analysis. The findings underscore a significant upswing in global interest in IDS research. There are a number of highly cited authors in IDS research who have produced classic work, notably Golde (2005), Austin (2002), and Lee (2008), while Kirsi Pyhältö emerges as a prominent contemporary author in the field. Four key themes emerge from the co-occurrence analysis: health, mental well-being and pandemic; international doctoral education and development; doctoral students' academic practice; and culture and diversity. These themes provide an insight into a variety of competitive and performative pressures facing contemporary doctoral students including publication, job hunting, socialisation, and identity formation. Although research centers in English-speaking countries remain dominant, China's ascending prominence signals increasing engagement from Chinese researchers. This study will contribute to the conference's theme by examining the effects of the global massification of doctoral education (Golde & Walker, 2006). By delving into the cross-system learning and research journeys of doctoral cohorts in contemporary academia, this study aids scholars in comprehending the challenges within this expanding landscape. Finally, this study poses critical questions that will stimulate robust discussions on the future directions of higher education and the evolving concept of the doctoral education in the modern university.

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## Paper 61: International female doctoral researchers' perspective of the purpose of doctoral education within the context of globalisation

**Daixuan Xie, Lancaster University, UK**

In the global knowledge economy, international student mobility (ISM) has stood out as a dominant component within the global higher education market from a financial perspective (Findlay et al. 2012; Robertson & Scholte, 2007). Based on this phenomenon, my research focuses on the reasons behind the growing prevalence of female international doctoral researchers. Some scholars argue that higher education has transformed into a commodity that higher education institutions utilise to generate incomes, which, in turn, propels the expansion of international doctoral researchers (Williams, 2016). Others suggest that this phenomenon is a result of the uneven distribution of educational and research resources across the globe, particularly the presence of well-qualified research institutions primarily in Western countries, due to the far-reaching effects of globalisation (Altbach et al., 2019). My research study specifically concentrates on the individual perspectives of international female doctoral candidates concerning the purpose of an overseas doctoral education. Research focusing on females at the doctoral level has, until now, received comparatively little attention. Feminist theory provides a fresh lens to analyse women's intentions and expectations underpinning contemporary universities for all genders. This study integrates Bourdieu's theory of capital with a data-driven approach based on feminist theory (Bourdieu, 1986). To collect the data, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The findings help higher education institutions' understanding of the intentions and expectations of female doctoral candidates in pursuing a doctorate abroad and demonstrates how they make transformation in practice and develop policies that cater to the needs and expectations of these students, thereby contributing to the possibility of a more inclusive and just future. By promoting the recognition of women's unique qualities and the breaking down of the stereotype that women do not necessarily need to pursue a PhD, a feminist perspective helps to analyse female's voice in doctoral education.

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## ROUNDTABLE 2

# THE FUTURE OF ACADEMIC JOURNALS – TIME FOR A BIG RETHINK?

**Cally Guerin, Australian National University, Australia**

**Jisun Jung, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

**Hugo Horta, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

There is widespread concern that academic journals becoming unfit for purpose. Academic publishing is caught between multiple intertwined tensions. Traditional publications are increasingly unaffordable, especially for academics in the Global South, where library budgets are even tighter than in the Global North. Digital publication offers cheaper alternatives and more channels for scholars to get their message out, so that they less dependent upon traditional publishers and print media. This move towards open access publishing is carving out new and exciting ways to share innovative thinking in all disciplines. Meanwhile, universities push their researchers to publish in highly ranked, peer-reviewed journals in order to bring kudos to the institution and the concomitant advantages of increased funding and collaboration opportunities. Academic positions and subsequent promotion demand publications in well-regarded journals. The ongoing dominance of English language publication further limits the diversity of voices being heard, but attempts to include a broader range of voices have proven more challenging than anticipated (Besnier, 2019). Traditional academic journal publishers, conscious of the threat of open access, have devised ways to make their journals available to broader audiences, frequently by transferring the cost of open access from readers to authors (Borrego, 2023; Greussing, 2020; Panda, 2022). As the volume of articles submitted to journals increases exponentially, the conventional process of anonymised peer review is becoming unsustainable. It is increasingly difficult to persuade suitable scholars to undertake this unpaid work; many academics must focus on producing their own publications rather than reviewing their peers' work. Innovations in open peer review look promising, but it's unclear whether they will have the desired effect (Allen et al. 2022).

### Discussion Questions

1. How can journals maintain their responsibility to publish high-quality research while simultaneously drawing in new and different voices? Do the criteria of assessment need to change?
2. What would make peer review a more desirable activity? How can we genuinely reward this work without introducing perverse incentives?
3. What can universities do to assess the quality of research publications made available outside traditional peer review processes?
4. How does all of this affect those in precarious university employment?

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### ROUNDTABLE 5

## THE 'IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY READING GROUP' AS AN ACTIVIST GENERATOR: WHEN CONCEPTS CRACK PRACTICES

**Jeanette Fyffe, Deakin University, Australia**

**John Hannon, La Trobe University, Australia**

**Tai Peseta, Western Sydney University, Australia**

**Fiona Salisbury, Western Sydney University, Australia**

Since 2016, we have each been involved in the cross-institutional 'Idea of the University' (IOU) Reading Group where senior leaders, academics (sessional, contract, continuing, retired), PhD students, and professional staff – located in vastly different parts of the university – engage together in scholarly reading in the field of Critical University Studies (Peseta et al., 2019). While we aim to start with the 'text itself' (text is broadly constituted and has included journal articles, book chapters, visual essays, tv shows, blog posts, online lectures etc), with some regularity, each of us aims to mine the text for concepts that enable us to 'think otherwise' (Grant & Holmes, 2007) about our professional practices. Some of us are more experienced than others in making those translations (for a whole range of reasons), and it raises the question about how the concepts we read and think with, transform into judgements and actions that remake the university. How do we work with concepts in ways that help create a crack in a practice or intervene in a habit that allows us to test and enact the idea of the University we are attached to? What's our responsibility to hold those concepts loosely because of the partiality of our access to information and the availability of contending evidence? In this Roundtable, we each offer an example of an idea/concept from the Reading Group that has imprinted itself on our imaginations, and has pushed a practice we engage in, in a new direction. What's the concept that has created a crack in our practice and how has it done so? Our goal is to share how the scholarly concepts we think with are vital and consequential to the way we operate as university workers – with, and for, others. In the process, we make the case that while reading together as a collective activity may not feel entirely 'activist', it is germane to the way we navigate, deploy our capacities, and understand that our responsibility is to make and remake the university. We invite reflection and discussion with others on the specific ideas from the CUS literature that have inspired you to throw a wrench into the university machine.

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## Paper 54: Students' perceived purposes of higher education: A comparative analysis between Chinese liberal arts students at Chinese vs. U.S. universities

**Mianmian Fei, The Ohio State University, USA**

The purposes of higher education have been a continuous topic of discussion in both the U.S. and China, where societal considerations intersect and contend with individual benefits. However, across national contexts, this discussion has been theoretical or primarily confined to high-level personnel. Despite students being direct participants in higher education, their perspectives have been largely absent. Incorporating students' voices can complement institutional and policy narratives, providing more complex understandings in the enduring discussion on higher education purposes (Brooks et al., 2021; Cuellar et al., 2022). This study aims to investigate how Chinese students majoring in liberal arts at Chinese universities and their counterparts at U.S. universities perceive the purposes of higher education. Additionally, considering that both student cohorts share experiences of socialisation and K-12 education in China, it strives to understand in what way their experiences within the higher education systems of the two countries shape such perspectives, thereby highlighting the influences of college experiences on students' perceived purposes of higher education. I focus on students in liberal arts majors since the value of liberal arts has consistently been at the center of discussions on higher education purposes. Furthermore, influenced by a strong pragmatic view of higher education, Chinese students majoring in liberal arts are in the minority at both Chinese and U.S. universities (Ma, 2020). Yet, their unconventional major choices suggest that they likely hold complex views on higher education purposes beyond mere considerations of job prospects and economic returns. The research does not adopt the conventional public/private framework for analysing higher education purposes. The various higher education purposes categorised under "public" and "private" often transcend the public/private divide and intersect with each other (Labaree, 1997). Moreover, Marginson and Yang (2022) argue that this framework assumes the positioning of higher education in the Anglo-American tradition, which does not align with that in the Chinese tradition. Therefore, applying the framework to study Chinese students' perspectives, especially those who engage in transnational higher education journeys, can be problematic. Instead, the study opts for an alternative, specifying the multiple higher education purposes identified in relevant literature without categorising them into public/private buckets.

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**Paper 57: Navigating ‘in-between’: Chinese international students’ stressors and acculturation in Africa**

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**Kun Dai, The Chinese University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**

Amidst the internationalisation of higher education, the acculturation process of international students has emerged as a significant research domain. While extant studies predominantly concentrate on acculturation experiences in developed nations, the exploration of stressors and acculturation within non-traditional learning destinations remains relatively limited. The growing collaboration between China and Africa has led to increased educational cooperation and exchange between these regions, with student exchange being a crucial avenue for enhancing mutual benefits and cross-cultural understanding. This study aims to address this research gap by examining the stressors and acculturation experiences of this unconventional case of Chinese students who exchange in Africa. Drawing upon Kim’s three-stage framework of “Stress-Adaptation-Development” (Kim, 2001) as an analytical tool, the research delves into the challenges and acculturation strategies of Chinese international students during their stay in Africa. Through qualitative in-depth interviews with 15 participants engaged in academic exchanges in Africa for durations spanning 6 to 12 months, the study uncovers a range of stressors and adjustments that students undergo in an untraditional destination. Predominant challenges encompass second language anxiety, experiences of discrimination, as well as stressors emanating from educational and sociocultural domains. These challenges have the potential to give rise to adverse outcomes such as depression, discrimination, disruptions in sleep patterns, and other symptomatic manifestations that impact both the mental and physical well-being of the students. In response to these challenges, students will progressively navigate a path of adjustment and adaptation in the new environment. The adaptation is not a simply integration of adjusting to the new culture. Rather it is a complex strategy of “in-between” (Bhabha, 1994) status that student act and make choices within the constraints and possibilities of their situation as a result of exposure to both Chinese and African cultural logics. The sense of in-betweenness will shape their further acculturation during their negotiation between different cultural boundaries. By elucidating the complexities of their acculturation trajectories, this study enriches scholarly discourse on the acculturation experience within Global South and sheds light on a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies in the navigation trajectories within the distinct context settings.

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## Paper 70: Shaping of interdisciplinary academic learner identity among undergraduate students through interdisciplinary general education

**Lam Man Ho Adrian, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

The rapid development of interdisciplinary education in universities worldwide leads to further discussions of how students can embrace both disciplinary affiliation and interdisciplinary orientation when constructing their interdisciplinary academic learner identities (Simula & Scott, 2021). Interdisciplinary education should not only provide students with interdisciplinary knowledge and competence but also foster interdisciplinarity in their academic learner identities, which enable active and sustained engagement throughout their learning experience (Deters et al., 2021). Nonetheless, although interdisciplinary education encourages reimagining rather than displacing disciplines, it remains uncertain to what extent can students recognise the fluidity and multiplicity of disciplinary boundaries (Turner et al., 2022). The challenge for students lies in creating interdisciplinary narratives that are new and diverse while still being rooted in the core of their disciplines with respective discourses and boundaries (Cuevas-Garcia, 2021). These dynamic and iterative processes among students and teachers, and in the context of social, organisational, and institutional structures, involve formulating various nested and confluent relationships across different academic disciplines, where they all connect and interact, while remaining permeable and transient at the same time (Brew, 2008). This study aims to offer an agent-based qualitative narration of interdisciplinary learning trajectories among undergraduate students, especially the underlying intellectual, behavioural, personal, and emotional processes and outcomes when they are exploring, evolving, and adapting their interdisciplinary academic learner identities. This involves a thematic analysis of the series of individual narrative interviews conducted with senior undergraduate students coming from various academic programmes at the University of Hong Kong. All these students have completed all of their Common Core courses as their interdisciplinary General Education course graduation requirements. This study will be guided by three research questions, namely how these students shape their interdisciplinary academic learner identities, what factors affect the development of their identities, and what challenges are confronted by them when they are developing their identities.

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## Paper 73: A study of student's lived experiences in the transition from secondary school to higher education

**Kohei Okada, Kyoto University, Japan**

Student's transition into higher education has attracted academic attention in recent years (Gale, and Parker 2014). The direct transition from secondary school especially is difficult for young people as they are aware of the significant academic and socio-cultural differences between educational stages. In other words, the process of transition is not linear and delimited but complex and continuous. Therefore, it is required to focus on individual experiences (Field 2010). However, much of the previous research has focused only on one period of first year students, and not focused on qualitative experience of the students (Noyens et al 2017). In Japan, since the 1990s, educational practices such as first-year education and remedial education, as well as reforms of entrance examinations to emphasis on interviews and written research have been promoted to help student's smooth transition (Yamada 2011). In contrast, academic discussions in Japan consist of high school education, university education and the university entrance examinations that link them, and the period between university acceptance and university entrance has hardly received any attention. What these studies have in common is a failure to identify the continuous student's lived experiences in the transition into higher education. Therefore, longitudinal interviews were conducted with 10 students going to X University in Japan, three times each. These interviews were immediately after university acceptance, before entering university and at the end of the first semester of the first year, which allowed the transition from high school to university to be continuously in focus. The essential question of this research is how students experience the transition from high school to university. As a result, some students favorably accepted the preparation for university by choosing a university linked to their post-graduation career. In contrast, the other students felt conflicted and emotionally disturbed in the period between high school graduation and university entrances. The unique feature of this approach is that it focuses on the micro student experience, rather than the neoliberal idea of macro accountability required for higher education. In the presentation, I will discuss how the students went through the transition with each context as student's lived experience.

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## Paper 7: Understanding education studies from the lens of Carsun Chang's philosophy of education

**Yuting Jia, University of Strathclyde, UK**

Educational activity presents a universal structure of relations, which is expressed in the relationship between the educator, the educated, and the world (Friesen & Kenklies, 2022). In brief, educational activities are intended for the “spiritual formation” of the individual (Westbury et al., 2015). In Anglophone cultures, the university has become an important sign of educational activity. Also, the university has become an important place to discuss its problems (I – World). Regardless, it seems that our horizons for discussing the term university are becoming narrower and narrower. Meanwhile, it is easy to associate university with jobs and skills. Or with performance, efficiency and measurement. Certainly, it is an essential dimension of evaluation in modern society. But is it really a mechanical education/technocracy that we are seeking? The answer is obvious. The horizon of the “spiritual formation” of the individual has been set aside (Westbury et al., 2015). It is the abstract nature of what we need as human beings (Arts and humanities, Geisteswissenschaft, or 精神). A subjective world based on human consciousness, thought, emotion, etc. Moreover, it contains self-reflection about science, technology, and machines. This paper presents the philosophy of education from the perspective of Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai, 張君勱, 1887-1969) which responds to the educational phenomena mentioned previously. Carsun Chang identifies with Chinese politicians and idealistic philosophers. However, very few studies have interpreted his ideas in the context of modern education studies. Chen (2017) defined Chang's thought as the philosophy of education. And I believe that Chang's theory can be further explored from both the philosophy of life as well as the irrationalist perspective. Chang's academic travels included visits to Japan, France and Germany. There, he came in contact with H. Bergson (1859-1941) and R. Eucken (1846-1926), which greatly influenced the development of his thoughts (Chen, 2017). The works on Chang's philosophy of life include *Das Lebensproblem in China und in Europa*, *Science and the Outlook on Life*, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, *Essays on Chinese, Western and Indian Philosophy*, *Idealist Philosopher of Sixteenth-Century China*, and others.

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## Paper 36: Revisiting religious higher education in China: Comparative analysis of Furen University narratives

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Before the establishment of the communist regime in 1949, Christian colleges played a pioneering role in the development of China's modern higher education institutions (Ris 2020). From the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, 16 Christian colleges (13 Protestant and 3 Roman Catholic) were established, and together, they were responsible for approximately 10-15% of China's university student population (Ma 1996; Tao 2009). The only Pontifical

Catholic university in modern China, Furen University was established in 1925 by the Congregation of the American Cassinese–Benedictine Fathers and administered by the German-based Society of Divine Word Fathers from 1933 to 1950 (Chen 2004). Shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Furen was taken over by the communist government and incorporated into the new state-controlled higher education system. This study adopts a comparative approach toward analysing narratives about Furen University during its decades-long operation in modern China. The data have been obtained from three main sources. The first is academic literature in Chinese on Furen University published in the reform era, which began in 1978. First-hand historical data are another rich source, including newsletters and magazines published by Furen University. Our final data source is literature on Furen published in English by Chinese as well as non-Chinese scholars alike. Using multiple sources of data enables us to “integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded” (Wodak and Meyer 2001, p. 65). We also triangulate information and comparatively analyse primary sources in relation to secondary ones and Chinese literature relative to English literature. We identify and deconstruct several popular arguments (Sinicisation, secularisation, and patriotism) on Furen University that have emerged in Chinese literature. The three popular arguments reveal how historical narratives about Furen have been constructed within the party-state's dominant nationalist discourse, wherein the state promotes a secularisation agenda and Chinese culture is interpreted as possessing enormous power to Sinicise and assimilate non-

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## Paper 37: The expansion of corporate-sponsored tuition benefits to America's low-wage workers

**Federick Ngo, University of Nevada, USA**

In 2014, Starbucks made waves in both business and higher education when it announced the Starbucks College Achievement Plan (SCAP), an exclusive collaboration with Arizona State University through which employees received full-tuition coverage and access to online undergraduate programs. By the spring of 2022, SCAP had over 20,000 participants, and over 8,500 employees had earned college degrees (Nietzel, 2022). Target, Amazon, and other large corporations – together employing millions of U.S. workers – likewise have implemented tuition benefit programs with ranging levels of support for their employees. These recent corporate investments are notable since they significantly expand access to higher education for America's 53 million low-wage workers, who comprise 44% of the total workforce. Seventy-eight percent of low-wage workers have not completed a college degree (Ross & Bateman, 2019), underscoring the impact the expansion of employer-sponsored tuition benefit programs could have on

the postsecondary attainment of millions of Americans. Yet, the proliferation of these programs should also give pause, as they entangle low-wage, exploitative work with the promise of higher education. We must ask: What are the goals of these programs? How are they being implemented? Are students and workers truly benefitting? This study contributes to the field's understanding of these new players in college access by reviewing research on the status of low-wage workers, the purposes of employer-sponsored benefit programs, and best practices in college access programs. We then provide a descriptive overview of corporate-sponsored tuition benefit (CSTB) programs for low-wage workers among their 50 largest employers. Because CSTBs simultaneously have the goals of college access, employee retention, and return on investment, we focus on variation in program components, including which workers are eligible, where benefits can be used, and what performance requirements exist to get and maintain the benefit award. We analyse the expansion of these programs through the lenses of neoliberalism and the social compact for public support of higher education.

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## Paper 41: Identity, community and engagement: A critical examination of the relationship between higher education and the professions

**Paul Campbell, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

Discussions about bridging research, policy, and practice, and the relationship between the academy and professions, are long-standing. Aristotle made a distinction between functional knowledge and what he articulated as *phronesis*; the professional knowledge needed for those engaged in moral or value-implicated work in public spaces (Dunne, 1997; Wyse et al., 2020). In modern times, how we comprehend and negotiate the distinct understandings and positioning of practice and theory, or practice and research, as well as what this means for higher education and professions/professionals, remains vibrant and worthy of critical consideration (Brookfield, 2017). There is also a need to challenge the discursive and organising tools that have come to characterise Western ideas of progress and modernity and the associated certainties of what constitutes valuable knowledge and knowing (Harrison & Lockett, 2019). In some cases this has created a false analytical dualism, conceptualising higher education with a focus on scholarly output and the development of critical thinking, with the professions conversely focused on technical expertise and methods of training. This conceptual paper explores: (RQ1): How can the relationship between higher education and the professions be conceptualised?; (RQ2): How, if at all, are these relationships influenced by the logic that has come to characterise the work of higher education institutions?; and (RQ3): What role could higher education play in supporting the work of the professions, and societal advancement more broadly? Drawing upon existing and emerging work (Campbell et al., 2023), the use of metaphor as a meaning-

making tool, and the positionality of the author, this paper examines the complex relationship between higher education and the professions, and the implications of this for academic identity, community and engagement and what this means more broadly for conceptions of research impact, output, and quality. In doing so, critical alternatives are offered as to how academic identity, community, and engagement are understood with particular attention to research engagement and output.

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## Paper 68: Reconsidering the nature of learning how to be an academic as situated in Japanese *Kenkyūshitsu*

**Mako Kawano, Kyoto University, Japan**

As neoliberalism dominates today's higher education sector, the university's potential tends to be narrowed down to its economic contribution (Barnett 2018). Teacher-student relationship is one of the areas affected (Desierto and De Maio 2020) since it prioritises competition and efficiency. Japan is not an exception. The national government seeks establishing internationally compatible and competitive universities. That resulted in the abolition of *Kōzasei* (a chair system) at many research-intensive universities. It's often argued that this reform is necessary to create a research environment where younger researchers are encouraged to pursue their own lines of research and engage in interdisciplinary research collaborations, the two aspects of research work which are arguably prevented by the closed nature of *Kōzasei*. While such criticism is warranted, *Kōzasei* has also assumed a crucial role in nurturing future researchers at the graduate level education. My research attempts to understand this often-neglected educational aspect of *Kōzasei*. One of the key educational features of *Kōzasei* relates to deep relationality nurtured through the closed and yet dense relationship among those who belong to *Kenkyūshitsu* (a community based on *Kōzasei*). Its problem of exclusivity withstanding, it can be argued that the relationality has been the fundamental part of learning to become a researcher in Japanese academia. To explore the centrality of relationality towards learning among the community members, I have selected one *Kenkyūshitsu* as a research site where many features of *Kōzasei*, including dense relationality and insularity, remain intact. My ongoing ethnographic study aims to understand the nature of learning as situated in Japanese *Kenkyūshitsu*. My particular interest lies in understanding the underlying epistemological base of learning as situated in *Kenkyūshitsu*, as it may give us a more accurate understanding of this educational praxis. To this end, I draw upon comparative philosopher Kasulis' (2002) discussion on the intimacy and integrity of cultural orientations. I will discuss the learning based on how *Kenkyūshitsu* is underpinned by an intimacy orientation which might resonate with the alternative philosophy advocated by Desierto and De Maio (2020). Consequently, this research may contribute to imagining an alternative educational praxis which seems to be working well in a Japanese cultural context.

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## Paper 72: Remaining true to research as a reflective practice and a sense of self

**Juliet Aleta Villanueva, University of the Philippines Open University, The Philippines**  
**Douglas Eacersall, University of Southern Queensland, Australia**

In this presentation, we aim to surface the reality of a prolonged development of a viable student research topic which may run against a doctoral education program's administrative processes, communications, and expectations. Through autoethnographic reflections from a dual perspective, we argue for providing due consideration to the importance of a research student's sense of self as gleaned through their past experiences and interactions in workplace learning alongside research project development and refinement. We present the process of this refinement as largely hidden in sensemaking, blogging and other forms of writing, as well as exchanges with significant others enabling project conceptualisation. The process entails confronting the inner discomfort and conflicting identities to move forward and explore possibilities in one's research project or stepping out of one's comfort zone to delve into other research topics. In the case of our reflections, the experiences of a budding researcher and academic while engaged in community-based education directed the student towards a practical roots-based research project, that not only led to a viable research topic but also a sense of remaining true to herself in making an ongoing contribution to teaching and learning in the Philippine context. The narrative also becomes a disclosure of limitations and failures which were hurdled to fully embrace one's present to restart imagining future BE-comings. The study demonstrates that prior to, and also throughout the research journey, the student's experiences and interactions are integral to one's burgeoning researcher identity. We therefore define and affirm the interconnectedness of identities: scholarly identity, researcher identity and academic identity. Likewise, we highlight workplace learning, reflective practice and identity trajectory theory as lenses to demonstrate the significance of the self in undertaking postgraduate research. According to the tenets of identity-trajectory, learning is viewed as developmental and lifelong, a call to appreciate the individual researcher's growing sense of agency. We assert for doctoral education programs to remain true as a reflective practice that should afford the time to engage in a philosophy of care and mattering for our sense of self and our identities if we are to be truly inclusive in higher education.

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### **Paper 74: The promise and peril of interdisciplinarity: Academic identity and engagement in interdisciplinary practice**

**Karri A. Holley, The University of Alabama, USA**

The ability to move beyond the disciplinary boundaries which have traditionally controlled the behaviors of academic researchers is positioned as an essential component of the 21st century knowledge system. However, interdisciplinarity is often associated with critiques of the neoliberal and entrepreneurial university. Such university cultures prioritise innovation and knowledge connected to Marketisation and commercialisation. This presentation examines the question of academic identity and engagement in interdisciplinary practice from the perspective of university faculty. Drawing on qualitative data collected through interviews with faculty from a range of academic disciplines (social sciences, humanities, and STEM) at an American research university, the themes explore how faculty perceive interdisciplinary practices as holding both promise and peril. Higher education scholars have identified academic disciplines as “tribes and territories” as well as distinct cultural communities; more recent scholarship on interdisciplinarity considers the cross-fertilisation of intellectual ideas and knowledge to be a joy of academic life, a theme echoed by the faculty in this study. While such connections do not negate the global dominance of neoliberalism as an ideology in higher education, they do suggest that faculty might find individual personal rewards through interdisciplinary engagement. Faculty may find interdisciplinary practices to be of benefit to academic identity, but such practices all too often occur under the looming market-driven umbrella of commercialisation. From an institutional perspective, interdisciplinary knowledge is a knowledge that needs to have value, a definition that does not always align with the personal interests and individual rewards prioritised by faculty engaged with such work. This presentation concludes by exploring ways to manage this tension in theory and practice. Researchers should use caution in wholly negating interdisciplinarity as a practice with negative consequences, and instead recognise the complex individual faculty behaviors for engaging in interdisciplinary work. Consideration instead should be given to the importance of institutional space for exploring the crucial role of knowledge to academic identity and development. Such a role balances the critique of embracing interdisciplinarity as a sole vehicle for innovation and allows for individual exploration and growth.

### **Paper 76: Centring back the intrinsic contribution of higher education: Student self-formation through disciplinary knowledge**

**Soyoung Lee, University of Oxford, UK**

Critiques have been raised against the prevailing neoliberal understanding of higher education, arguing that it inadequately captures the reality and ideals of higher education. A key limitation is its tendency to homogenise individual student pursuits, neglecting student agency—the capacity to think and act on their own behalf. In contrast, the emerging concept of *higher education as student self-formation* places students’ reflexive agency at the centre, emphasising their achievement of the ideal self upon completing higher education (Marginson, 2023). This concept has gained attention as an alternative framework better reflecting the contributions of higher education (Marginson et al., 2023). However, the notions of agency and



self-formation are often treated as buzzwords, requiring further empirical support and conceptual elaboration (Inouye et al., 2022; Lee, 2021). This study aims to contribute to advancing the early research program on self-formation. Acknowledging the transformative power of knowledge (Young, 2007), it is argued that students' agentic self-formation in higher education is distinctive due to their engagement with disciplinary knowledge. A recent study explored how knowledge transforms students by tracing their changing accounts of disciplinary knowledge, revealing increasingly inclusive and relational accounts related to the self and wider society (Ashwin et al., 2022). Building on this work, the present study examines how students engage with the transformative power of knowledge to achieve their individually unique personal projects. This paper is part of a larger-scale project aiming to develop a theory of students' academic self-formation. Employing a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), the study traces the first-year experiences of thirteen Korean students in graduate programs in either Korean or UK higher education. This enabled searching for a common mechanism of academic self-formation across academic settings (Korea/UK) and student status (local/international). The analysis reveals that students' engagement with knowledge is integral to their active self-formation. Longitudinal analysis further demonstrates how students develop different forms of relationships between the self, knowledge, and society in different fields, challenging the narrow view of student formation in the neoliberal conception of higher education. By providing empirical evidence for the theorisation of self-formation, this study contributes to revitalising alternative frameworks for understanding higher education.

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## Paper 38: The role of the Chinese Communist Party in sino-foreign cooperative universities: Governance and influence

**Tatiana Fumasoli, UCL University College London, UK**  
**Xu Liu, South University of Science and Technology, China**

This paper explores the relationship between the state and the university in China drawing on the theory multi-level governance. The theory explains how political decisions are made in complex systems of governance, where authority and policy-making responsibilities are distributed across multiple levels of government and non-governmental actors. It posits that in today's interconnected world, power is spread across different levels – local, regional, national and involves a wide range of stakeholders (Hooghe and Marks, 2003). Higher Education has been analysed from a multi-level governance perspective by a number of scholars (Fumasoli, 2015). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has played a distinct role in university governance, setting it apart from other nations through centralised rule at national level (CCP Central Committee, 2018; Liu, 2020). However, universities, located in provinces and municipalities manage relationships with regional and local representatives of the CCP. They can be created in partnership with other institutions, extending the number of actors engaged in their management. Of particular interest, albeit still with limited discussion in international literature, is the role of the CCP in Sino-foreign cooperative universities in China. Sino-foreign cooperative universities are independent legal entities, and, by December 2023, there will be ten such institutions. These cooperative universities are established through collaboration between Chinese and foreign educational institutions, possessing their own legal status and the autonomy to manage and operate independently (Yang, 2015). This research delves into the establishment and functioning of the University Communist Committee of the Party (UCCP) within Sino-foreign cooperative universities. It draws extensively from CCP documents and interviews with senior university managers in selected Sino-foreign cooperative universities to elucidates the role played by the CCP in the institutional governance of these universities. Despite granting significant operational freedom to Sino-foreign cooperative universities concerning their mission, the CCP appears to influence significantly their governance and development. While this influence is partially achieved through the mandate that every Sino-foreign cooperative university must establish a UCCP to oversee the implementation of CCP policies within the university, the type of university, of foreign partner and the geographical location seem to nuance a generalised picture of uniform governance, highlighting differences in the distribution of roles and agency across institutions.

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## Paper 2: Influence of social class on educational aims of PhD students in Hong Kong

**Chi Wui Ng, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China**

Research on doctoral education focuses on western countries in lieu of the Asia-Pacific region despite the rapid growth of higher education market and surging enrolment in tertiary education in the region. Antecedent research on doctoral education has predominantly been conducted from a top-down policy-based perspective in lieu of a bottom-up student-based perspective (Hughes & Tight, 2013; Shin et al., 2018). Even studies conducted from students' perspectives chiefly zeroed in on doctoral students' learning experience with limited research on students' educational aims, which are influential in their learning experience and future careers. Students pursue doctoral education to achieve desirable changes in themselves. Most research investigates impacts of multifarious factors on doctoral students' educational aims from a psychological perspective. By combining philosophical and sociological approaches, this qualitative study examines why and how Hong Kong students in distinct social classes pursue a PhD with reference to Cheng's (1998) analytical framework of educational aimed values, Weidman et al.'s (2001) framework for the socialisation of graduate and professional students, and Bourdieu's (1977, 1997) capital theory. Semi-structured interviews are being conducted with PhD students from universities funded by the University Grants Committee in Hong Kong recruited by means of convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Initial results from the first twelve interviews indicate that these students, irrespective of their social class, are pursuing doctoral education to achieve academic excellence, which is viewed as constitutively desirable as a necessary component of a desirable whole of a career in tertiary institutions. Amongst various forms of capital, social capital primarily impacts doctoral students' socialisation strategies for achievement of their educational aims. This study provides empirical evidence for the reproduction of the societal structure by education in Hong Kong. A better understanding of the relationship between doctoral students' social class and educational aims ameliorates and optimises PhD programmes. Future work will continue to explore how PhD students in Hong Kong may modify their educational aims and socialisation strategies when they proceed with their studies.

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## Paper 21: Encountering each other: On the ‘inconvenience’ of university staff and prospective doctoral applicants

**James Burford and Emily F. Henderson,**  
University of Warwick, UK

The pre-application stage of doctoral admissions is an infrequently examined HE phenomenon despite the fact that it is an ordinary activity for university staff involved in doctoral recruitment. As a glut of YouTube advice videos attests (see Kier-Byfield, Burford & Henderson, 2023), pre-application doctoral communications (hereafter PADC) between prospective applicants and university staff can be life-shaping, opening up or closing down applicants' pathways into the formal admission process. Furthermore, PADC frequently evades institutional oversight, shrugging off formal attempts to address inequalities that become sedimented around admissions (Burford et al., 2023). This presentation thinks across an institutional case study, which examined PADC in one UK university ([www.warwick.ac.uk/padc](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/padc)). Reading across data collected with 19 doctoral supervisors, 12 academic directors of doctoral programmes, 8 doctoral programme officers, and 15 minoritised doctoral students on their experiences and understandings of PADC, it was clear that PADC is an affectively complex phenomenon, and one of the dominant affective strands related to irritation and frustration. As such, this presentation explores the notion of *inconvenience* in relation to PADC, sparked by our engagement with Berlant's 2022 book *On the Inconvenience of Other People*, which examines the threats and pleasures of coexistence. Berlant (2022) contends that we cannot know each other without being inconvenient to each other, as inconvenience is 'a structural awkwardness in the encounter between someone and anything' (p. 9). For Berlant, inconvenience describes a foundational relation of living together: 'attachment, one might say, is what draws you out into the world; inconvenience is the adjustment from taking things in' (p. 6). Inconvenience is useful to think with because PADC involves receptivity and often ambivalent intimacies. We centre on a particular kind of inconvenience: the 'overcloseness at a physical distance' (Berlant, 2022, p. 2) that emerges when prospective doctoral applicants and university staff members begin interacting over email. We conceptualise these interactions as inconvenient in several ways. Firstly, in the sense that they are modes of contact that often cause disturbance or social friction. Secondly, we argue that *certain* prospective doctoral students are more likely than others to be designated 'inconvenient' by institutional stakeholders, or even inconvenient to the reproduction of the institution itself. While the presentation focuses on applying Berlant's concept to PADC in particular, a broader aim is to consider the inescapable friction and adjustment that inheres to sharing universities with others.

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## Paper 35: What research gets funded? Examining funding practices in doctoral education

**Kelsey Inouye, University of Oxford, UK**

**Éireann Attridge, University of Cambridge, UK**

**James Robson, University of Oxford, UK**

With its emphasis on market-driven principles and the commodification of education, neoliberalism ushered in a paradigm shift in the way universities operate. This paper examines one such way these economic forces influence the academy: how PhD funding mechanisms may shape knowledge production. In the UK, government-supported Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) are major sources of PhD funding. Each DTP is comprised of several universities which receive grants to allocate funding to a cohort of students each year. However, this process has become increasingly difficult as a growing number of students apply for limited spaces in PhD programs and even fewer funded positions. At the same time, there is pressure on universities to broadly align their funding criteria and processes with larger UK Research Council agendas. These funding decisions are important as funding can support or constrain access to PhD study across disciplines (see Lindler, 2020; McCulloch & Thomas, 2013), and mediate what research topics and methods are deemed valuable (see Franssen, et al., 2018). In other words, funding may contribute to the regulation of disciplinary and institutional norms, potentially deepening or entrenching existing inequalities. Thus, this project aims to better understand how funding structures may shape knowledge production by examining the criteria, processes, and practices involved in the allocation and conceptualisation of ‘fundable’ PhD research in the humanities and social sciences, towards the goal of gaining insight into what makes PhD applicants and research ‘fundable’—and therefore valid and valuable. Drawing on a sociology of knowledge in which knowledge is framed as contextual and rooted in social, political and economic structures, this project takes a case study approach to examine two UK DTPs. Data includes information gathered from DTP websites and interviews with actors who nominate and assess funding applications, as well as key stakeholders involved in practical and strategic operations. The findings shed light on the assumptions and practices underlying DTP funding awards, and the role universities and funding bodies may play in shaping these decisions and strategic policies. The findings also offer broader implications for how funding structures support or constrain efforts towards diversity of knowledge and researchers in doctoral education, and provide recommendations for policy and practice, including strategies for improving research culture, which may be relevant within and beyond the UK.

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## ROUNDTABLE 6

# THE COLLECTIVE INDIVIDUAL: UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES AND OUR WORK DIFFERENTLY USING SOCIAL THEORY

**Amani Bell, University of Sydney, Australia**

**Suzanne Egan, Western Sydney University, Australia**

**Remy Y.S. Low, University of Sydney, Australia**

Journeys with theory need not be solitary. Join us to discuss how to use social theory to make sense of teaching, research and academic life. We have recently co-edited a book *Using Social Theory in Higher Education* (Low, Egan & Bell, 2023) which grew from a monthly reading group at the University of Sydney, Australia. In both the book and the reading group we explored the usefulness of social theory in higher education teaching and research, considered its possibilities and limits, and experienced the opportunity it offers to understand ourselves and our work differently. The reading group provided a space and process that enabled productive discussions about social theory. We are all time pressured but also craving the time to slow down and engage deeply. Boulous Walker calls for slow reading—a political act against the pressures of today’s higher education environment. Slow reading, depending on the context, may involve re-reading; or ‘sinking slowly and carefully into the atmosphere, mood...that the work creates’ (Boulous Walker, 2016, p. 178); or ‘a fine-tuned attention to detail and nuance’. Some of the metaphors Boulous Walker uses to depict these practices include ‘meandering’, ‘patience’, ‘intimacy’, ‘wondrous appreciation’, even meditation and love (ibid). We see resonances here with Moran’s depiction of Indigenous ways of learning as ‘non-linear...a constant circling back’ (Bell & Moran, 2023; Chap. 2). In our reading group we were able to engage in slow reading and discussion together. It’s important to create and protect these spaces and practices however we can. In this roundtable we invite you to join us in embodying the conference values of companionship, creativity and criticality in an hour of conversation about practical, everyday ways social theory helps us learn about ourselves and our work, as well as supportive spaces and relational processes.

### Questions for discussion include:

1. What are some ways you have used social theory to learn about yourself and your work in higher education?
2. What have you found to be limitations of social theory in your work context?
3. What spaces and relational processes enable you to “bring social theory down to earth”?

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## Paper 32: Remaking professional learning in universities: Learning lessons from atypical contexts

**Gina Saliba, Australian College of Applied Professions, Australia**

**Tai Peseta, Western Sydney University, Australia**

Professional learning is important for university staff because it enables them to develop their expertise and practice in teaching, learning and curriculum (Chalmers & Gardiner, 2014; Leibowitz, 2014). Its importance is even more pertinent in an era of neoliberalism as universities now occupy multiple, contested spaces that challenge the idea of a single purpose (Morrish, 2018). My doctoral research focuses on professional learning in transdisciplinary, meso-level spaces – specifically, in three curriculum contexts – a multidisciplinary committee, a teaching team for a large cohort unit, and a curriculum project team developing a pathway program. These are spaces where professional learning is rarely recognised or written about in the existing higher education literature. My study explores the structures and mechanisms that bring these transdisciplinary curriculum (Barrie & Pizzica, 2019; Millar, 2016) groups together to investigate whether, what, and how professional learning happens, as well as individuals' professional learning experiences in these unusual and atypical contexts. Utilising an interpretative, phenomenological approach, the first curriculum group case study site examined a multidisciplinary curriculum committee that acts as an advisory group within one Australian university. Through thematic analysis of focus groups and semi-structured interview data, various themes emerged about professional learning: the conditions that help university staff participate in the curriculum group, the nature and purpose of the curriculum group, the learning that happens within the curriculum group, how learning moves in and out of the group, and what participants see and describe as professional learning. This presentation explores three of these themes – the nature of the group (purpose and agency), the learning that the participants describe as happening within the group (attribution of learning and contributions to the group) and how the participants describe professional learning (what professional learning is). By exploring these three themes, it challenges our ideas about more traditional forms of professional learning. It instead looks at professional learning with critical pedagogies (Keesing-Styles, 2003), an approach supporting nuanced, inclusive, and diverse educative practices and rethinking how universities can best support professional learning in transdisciplinary spaces and the conditions under which it can best flourish.

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## Paper 6: Creating spaces for the ecologies of knowledges: Remaking universities for hopeful futures

**Catherine Manathunga, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia**

This paper seeks to [re]imagine the 21<sup>st</sup> century university as a decolonial, transcultural, democratic, post-monolingual and community-led public institution driven by epistemic justice (Santos, 2018). To work towards these transformations, higher education requires new philosophical and practical resources to address the lingering legacies of colonisation. These philosophies, theories and practices already reside within the world's diverse knowledge systems but, at present, we continue to rely mostly on science as the dominant form of knowledge creation. This paper scopes out the key urgent issues facing our world such as global inequities; institutional racism; pandemics; and environmental catastrophes. It will then reflect upon the place of universities at the heart of our Earth and trace the racism and neoliberal agendas currently dominating the global higher education sector.

To address these world challenges, this paper attempts to interrogate the deconstructive possibilities presented by postcolonial/decolonial and Indigenous social theories (Chakrabarty, 2007; Santos, 2014; Williams et al., 2018) and by underground and alternative universities to reshape higher education. This paper is a work-in-progress theoretical piece seeking to map out a potential book on the transformational possibilities inherent in decolonising the university, which would remake universities for hopeful futures. While many sectors and groups construct new knowledge, the university has a unique societal position in generating knowledge that is not only for commercial gain, immediate problem solving or serving the needs of a privileged few. The university has a central role in the production of imaginative, future-gazing, prefigurative and critical knowledge; cultural regeneration and renewal; and the formation of democratic and critical citizens (Rider, 2018). If we are to generate genuinely democratic approaches to knowledge creation, we must decolonise the university and transform the philosophical and practical foundations of higher education around the globe. The university needs to create the conditions where 'epistemic justice' can flourish (de Sousa Santos, 2014). This would involve creating spaces within universities and beyond where a productive, genuine dialogue could take place between *all* the world's knowledge systems. This would mean that First Nations and transcultural knowledges would be recognised as essential and of complementary relevance and validity to scientific knowledge.

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## Paper 45: An international study of higher education funding: Understanding radical alternatives for a hopeful future?

**Richard Watermeyer, University of Bristol, UK**

**Lisa Lucas, University of Bristol, UK**

**Rodolfo Benites Nieves, University of Bristol, UK**

The funding of higher education is one of the most challenging questions and indeed in the case of the funding model for higher education in England has been described as 'broken'. Marginson and Yang (2023) warn that unless a stable norm is established on the private/public shares of the cost of tuition in England its financing will remain volatile. University research in the UK is underfunded and the shortfall has been partially filled by international student fees, which is problematic given fluctuations in geopolitics. Hillman (2021) further argues that less income for universities may have a broad impact on their societal role. The prevailing neoliberal political economy of funding should be challenged, (Saunders, 2012). Is it possible to think about a hopeful future for the funding of higher education? This research aims to explore the challenges facing the funding of higher education across the four systems of higher education in the UK and compare these with funding models in other national systems (for example, Australia, New Zealand, Finland and Singapore). It considers arguments for a continuance of a marketised model of higher education or its collapsing and the possible creation of alternative funding arrangements drawing on these international comparisons. The research design takes a whole-community approach to problematising higher education funding models as understood from a range of expert stakeholder experiences and perspectives; drawn from different sector, institutional and disciplinary settings. The research involves a literature review and critical analysis of national systems of funding and higher education policy documents and semi-structured one-hour long interviews with approximately 15 key international researchers and policy 'authorities' on higher education funding. The efficacy of funding models is considered alongside external economic, (geo)political and technological factors and global events that are seen to influence and affect higher education provision. For instance, the impact of a cost-of-living crisis and rising inflation; public funding cuts and more directly, prevalence of a hostile higher education policy environment. This research seeks to challenge the underlying assumptions and values of much of the discourse on the funding of higher education and look for radical alternatives (Bleemer et al, 2023).

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## Paper 60: Care-full futures? Disrupting carefree academic norms and remaking academic cultures

**Marie-Pierre Moreau, Anglia Ruskin University, UK**

The aim of this presentation is to generate a research-informed conversation about care-full academic cultures. In this context, 'care-full' refers to a culture which acknowledges the centrality of care and values its contribution to the ways organisations, communities and nations operate. Care itself is defined as 'the set of activities by which we act to organise our world, so that we can live in it the best way possible' (Tronto, 2009: 14). It is an essential, complex, multi-faceted component of life, often rendered invisible and devalued through its association with femininity; an embodied, emotional, intellectual and organisational labour. The presentation draws on research conducted between 2010–2023, primarily in a UK context, on carers in academia, including students, academics, professional staff, leadership and management staff and, more recently, ancillary staff. This research draws on an encompassing definition of carers, as providing care to children, parents, friends and other members of their family and community (Lynch, 2021). While care is ubiquitous and a condition of survival, this group offers a heuristic lens to reflect on the oft fraught and yet generative relationship between academic and care work as they cannot easily renounce their caring responsibilities. The theoretical framework is informed by principles borrowed primarily from critical theory and poststructuralism (Fraser, 2000; Lynch, 2021). Over the years, data were generated primarily through interviews, as well as through policy analysis, literature reviews, focus groups and surveys. Drawing on this body of work, I reflect on how we can develop an intervention generating social change through the development of 'care-full' academic cultures (Moreau, 2016; Moreau and Robertson, 2019). I call for the disruption of academic cultures which, under Covid-19, celebrate care/ers, yet pay lip service to this group through discourses which individualise and commodify care (for example through the neoliberal appropriation of 'self-care' and provision of lifestyle management tools). I advocate that, for universities to become 'care-full', they need to adopt a collective and critical approach to care relationships and embrace their disruptive and radical potentialities.

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### Resources

<https://theresearchwitch.wordpress.com/the-care-full-university/>

## Paper 9: Transnational partnerships in higher education: implication for governance and management

**Huili Si, The University of Manchester, UK**

**Robin Carey, University of Wolverhampton, UK**

Against the background of responding to changing societal conditions, the higher education sectors across the globe need to be adaptive and transit towards new forms of organising for sustainable development which reaches beyond national borders (Altbach & de Wits, 2020; Marginson, 2020). Transnational higher education (TNHE) partnership among diverse partners has exhibited its resilience against the impact of such societal uncertainties, and is recognised as an effective mode to pursue sustainable development in ecological, economic, and sociocultural perspectives. In China, however, TNHE governance and leadership are complex and developed in historical, geographic, social, political, economic and cultural contexts along its practices (Mizzi & Rocco 2013). There is a question about whether HE governance designed in Western countries, as an example, can fit well under other conditions in China. Furthermore, the motivations and interests behind the transnational stakeholders are highly related to their geographical, economic, and political proximity to the institutions (Lawn and Lingard, 2002). This provides the rationale for this research into the tensions, contestations and negotiations in the joint organisational governance and management of Sino-UK joint institutes and programmes. This research adopts Sino-foreign joint institutes as study case to explore, on the one hand, how China's TNHE decentralisation governance of Sino-foreign joint institutes is subject to regulatory interventions by the state and vulnerable to the changing global environment. On the other hand, it also explores how China's TNHE governance reforms influence the decision-making power allocated among different external stakeholders from Western universities as home education providers in Sino-foreign joint institutes. The premises of organisational theories are inherent in the conceptualisation of this research. Verhoest et al. (2004)'s typology of multi-dimensional autonomy is adopted as the methodology to contribute conceptual and empirical social understanding of TNHE governance and decision makings in Sino-foreign joint institutes. By addressing the call to consider the unequal power dynamics and hegemony of Western models in China's TNHE discourse, this research is the first systematic attempt to map and investigate TNHE governance and practices as they are perceived, experienced, shaped and mediated by different actors and interests from Chinese and Western partners. It offers insights into the workings of TNHE governance and leadership, indicating opportunities for policymakers and practitioners in the TNHE sector to reflect on governance and management at joint institutional level.

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## Paper 71: Evolving in practice or public image? The dilemma of university engagement in China's Greater Bay Area

**Taixing Shen, University College London, UK**

**Tatiana Fumasoli, University College London, UK**

The Greater Bay Area (GBA) represents an ambitious initiative by China's central government, introduced in 2019, to transform the Pearl River Delta into a more cohesive region encompassing Hong Kong and Macao. This initiative envisions the region as a reorganised megaregion, a multipolar cluster of dynamic urban centers designed to streamline and enhance the capabilities of its constituent parts. Despite this, the initiatives have been subject to varied interpretations, perceived by some as symbolic of developmental aspirations, by others as nebulous strategies for infrastructure and real-estate investment, or critically, as a marketing strategy with ideological implications intended to obscure local disparities and tensions (Meulbroek et al., 2022). In this context, the higher education sector is recognised as significant in advancing regional integration. Governments from provincial and municipal level, along with universities, are actively implementing the central government's call, formulating specific policies to encourage cooperation and integration. Universities are strategising accordingly, with actions including establishing branch campuses and fostering partnerships between Chinese and Hong Kong/Macao universities. Nevertheless, these positive responses do not fully reflect the underlying challenges. The present study focuses on potential issues arising from the 'one country, two systems' framework, emphasising university governance, academic autonomy, and cultural differences (Xie et al., 2019). In this light, this study aims to focus on university, as an institutional player, examining its interaction and evolution in the political, policy, economic and society in the implementation of Beijing's development agenda. The research aims to penetrate invisible barriers and gather comprehensive insights into university engagement within the GBA. We hypothesise that despite assertive governance from central to local levels, higher education institutions may engage selectively (Fumasoli and Huisman, 2013, Fumasoli et al, 2020; Shen and Fumasoli 2023). Preliminary observations based on 5 selected universities in the GBA suggest a distinction where some universities are actively pursuing development, while others maintain a cautious stance yet engage actively in public relations (Shen and Fumasoli, 2023).

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### Paper 39: Gender equality for a hopeful future: Higher education leadership agency in mainstreaming gender equality in universities of Kazakhstan

**Zumrad Kataeva, Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan**

**Naureen Durrani, Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan**

**Aray Rakhimzhanova, Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan**

**Svetlana Shakirova, Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University, Kazakhstan**

Despite being a catalyst for promoting gender equality, higher education institutions (HEIs) remain both gendered and gendering organisations (Acker, 1998), continuing to reproduce discriminatory gender norms (Morley, 2007) dictated by power relations and gendered hierarchies (Morley, 2007; Roos et al., 2020; Subrahmanian, 2005). Within this context, senior leaders occupy an important role as central agents in shaping the values and practices of HEIs, directly impacting gender-based hierarchical structures and power dynamics (Cortis et al. 2022). As a newly independent state, Kazakhstan is committed to promoting gender equality. The country is a signatory of global gender equality initiatives. As a part of its 'modernisation' agenda, Kazakhstan has initiated the policy of gender mainstreaming (GM) in HEIs through the establishment of research centers on gender studies and the introduction of gender-focused courses in wide-ranging disciplines; however, very little is known about how GM courses and processes are enacted on the ground and to what effect. In this paper, we present HEIs leadership perspectives on the relationship between gender and education, and their potential actions within their authority to advance gender equality in and through education in Kazakhstan. Using qualitative semi-structured interviews with 13 senior higher education administrators including 6 male and 7 female senior administrators in 10 HEIs located in the South, North, West, and Central Kazakhstan our findings reveal that both male and female senior leaders perceive educational spaces in HE as gender-neutral, disregarding structural or institutional gender-related concerns. They tend to uphold and embody traditional gender norms and attribute existing gender challenges to cultural norms in ways that limit their agential potential. This paper contributes to scholarship focusing on developing and reinvigorating GM policies in HEIs by demonstrating a need to emphasise awareness of gender-related challenges and adopting a comprehensive approach to tackling gender inequality in and through education. Moreover, the paper expands on current debates on HE leaders' agency and how their beliefs, attitudes, and subjectivities on gender and gender equality can either facilitate or impede the implementation of GM policies and practices in HE.

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**PERFORMANCE 3**

# A DEVIL'S DICTIONARY OF ACADEMIC LIFE

**Bruce Macfarlane, The Education University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China**  
**Sussi Smith, freelance artist, UK**

Taking its inspiration from Ambrose Bierce's classic *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911), this alternative dictionary about university life consists of over 100 tongue-in-cheek definitions accompanied by a cartoon or image. The dictionary will be 'performed' via a set of rolling powerpoint slides intended to expose the everyday language of higher education to some much needed sarcastic scrutiny. Perhaps unsurprisingly the dictionary will begin with the letter 'A' (*Academic department*: 'A random collection of warring disciplinary factions united by a common loathing for the head of department') and end with the letter 'Z' (*Zoom backgrounds*: 'Fake visual displays of book-lined offices for academics who no longer have any books or offices to put them in anyway'). Other words and phrases receiving critical attention will include 'academic freedom', 'active learning', 'collegiality', 'early career researcher', 'h-index', 'learning outcomes', 'pedagogic research', 'professors', 'student-as-consumer', 'university manager' and 'webinar'. A highly innovative 'meeting method' was used to create the dictionary by doodling during tedious and sometimes entirely pointless academic meetings. Scribbling away in this fashion made attending and even occasionally chairing meetings more bearable. As the dictionary has taken around 8 years to write thus far it is an example of 'slow scholarship' in an age of hyper-performativity. Indeed, it will probably always remain incomplete. In terms of 'results' the definitions provided are intended to gently mock the nature of contemporary academic life whilst also seeking to make more serious points about university leadership, corporate (ir)responsibility, and the arrogance and hypocrisy of academics themselves. It is hoped that the definitions offered might amuse and occasionally provoke (in a good way). There will be no commentary during the rolling powerpoint display and there is no need for any audience participation but occasional laughter, or even the odd snigger, would be much appreciated. Any comments or questions could be raised during the last 5 or 10 minutes of the session following the slide show.





#### PERFORMANCE 4

## FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STAFF AND STUDENTS WITH CARING RESPONSIBILITIES: A RESEARCH- AND -ART-BASED COLLABORATION

**Marie-Pierre Moreau, Anglia Ruskin University, UK**

Carers are a group of particular significance to society, who contribute precious time and energy to other people's needs and, simply put, enable society to operate (Tronto, 2009). Yet, in many settings, they are largely rendered invisible and misrecognised. This is the case in academia where the figure of the 'bachelor boy' (Edwards 1993) has long prevailed and, linked to this, carers have been 'written out' of higher education narratives. The exhibition which will be hosted during the course of the conference is the outcome of a research - and art-based collaborative project (*Fostering a sense of belonging for higher education staff and students with caring responsibilities*, funded by Advance HE). It consists of a series of drawings which have been shared online, published in a recent article (Moreau and Galman, 2021) as well as on various campuses, in the UK, Ireland and now in Hong Kong. The art-work was produced by Sally Campbell Galman (now Sally Pirie), with the content drawing on the research I have conducted about carers in academia between 2010-2023, primarily in a UK context, including students, academics, professional staff, leadership and management staff, and, more recently, so called ancillary staff. Through the use of comics-based research, Sally and I seek to create some distanciation from the conventions of academia to expose its carefree norms and their diverse, complex and fluid effect on carers and non-carers. We also seek to encourage the development of practices which are equitable to all, including carers. Writing and publishing can be exclusionary processes and the arts are not immune to this. However, we argue that the arts do more than enhance accessibility but have the potential to challenge forms of academic writing which have historically 'written out' carers and care work. We conceive the exhibition as a disruption of the more conventional, carefree academic norms, an invitation to holding an over-due conversation about what carefull academic cultures would look like.

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#### Resources

<https://theresearchwitch.wordpress.com/the-care-full-university/>



### ROUNDTABLE 1

## RECONSTITUTING THE 'OBJECT' OF STUDENT-STAFF PARTNERSHIP TO BE 'THE UNIVERSITY': PUZZLES, PROVOCATIONS, AND POSSIBILITY SPACES

**Tai Peseta, Western Sydney University, Australia**

**Lilly-Rose Saliba, Western Sydney University, Australia**

**Samuel Suresh, Western Sydney University, Australia**

**Shivani Suresh, Western Sydney University, Australia**

Student-Staff Partnership (SSP) appears to be everywhere on the global higher education scene. And perhaps for good reason. From curriculum co-creation (Bovill et al., 2011; Clark & Simpson, 2020), classroom engagement (Cook Sather, 2020), technological uplift (Nahar & Cross, 2020), building student research capability (Maunder, 2021), to a panacea for equity (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020) and a bridge to employability (Hiradhar & Groves, 2022), SSP carries a weighty set of expectations. Its now recognisable value proposition – ‘respect, reciprocity, and responsibility’ (Cook-Sather et al., 2014) – which is referred to routinely by scholars and practitioners, promises a rather different kind of university for both staff and students to learn and labour in. It’s the university we’ve all been waiting for – the one of our dreams – where staff and students are curious co-creators, co-inquirers, and co-scholars together, transforming and remaking the university in the image of partnership: academics teach students who are eager and prepared learners with the necessary workload and recognition, and students engage in learning that is relational, relevant, authentic, and future-focused. Yet, SSP is rarely that, or perhaps more specifically, is rarely, *only* that. It is also an endeavour full of uncertainty, anxiety, and misrecognition where boundaries constantly shift; and at the same time, SSP is peppered by moments of profound insight, possibility, and transformation. In this Roundtable, we aim to bring to the CUS Conference a set of critical conversations about universities that our SSP team – from Western Sydney University – is constantly haunted and provoked by as we go about our student-staff partnership projects. First, what kind of ‘possibility space’ does the university feel like now? Second, how do students involved in SSP projects apprehend the university as an object of inquiry? And third, in what way has SSP been an opportunity for students to exercise their capacity to ‘make’ or co-create the university they see? Join us for hearty and heartfelt conversation.

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## Paper 25: A messy office, a door to close, a lovely rug: Academic women in place

**Barbara M. Grant, Waipapa Taumata Rau/University of  
Auckland, New Zealand**

Recently, a briefing took place in my academic division in anticipation of our long-planned and now imminent move to a new site. The academic leaders present were advised to instruct colleagues in their schools to bring nothing personal to their new offices: no plants, no photographs, no cherished objects. Henceforth, academics were to treat their university offices as impersonal working spaces. What does such a diktat mean? What is the university trying to achieve? What is wrong that needs to be fixed by a new order? What imaginary produced such a proposal or solution? The instruction seems particularly perverse in a time when the university is intent upon encouraging staff (as well as students) to return to campus after three years of repeated and involuntary displacement. In this paper, I will address these concerns by drawing on feminist theories of place and embodiment, which emerged as critiques of the anonymising – and thus by default masculine – imaginary of modernity that, within universities as other spheres, insisted on a separation of the public and the private (keeping women firmly in the latter). To provide a counterpoint to the impersonal university being (re)imagined in the instruction above, I will introduce research materials from an ethnography of women doctoral supervisors to show how (some) academics make over institutional spaces in order to turn them into inhabited, personal places marked by beauty, comfort, homeliness. This is an argument about the vital materiality and emplacement of supervision (and other academic) work, about the importance of offices, books and memorabilia (including objects and photographs). It's an argument for welcoming personalised places – unruly as they may be – in which academic workers do not have to leave their larger lives at the door. The paper's methodology is rooted in practices derived from feminist ethnography (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Lather, 2002) and the analysis of visual materials (Pink, 2006; Prosser & Schwartz, 1998; Wagner, 2011).

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## Paper 27: 'I spend lots of time on my appearance': Unpacking Chinese academic women's gendered subjectivities through the lens of bodily performance

**Boya Yuan, University of Auckland, New Zealand**

Existing feminist research has underscored the correlation between women's bodies and the construction of their gendered subjectivity (e.g., Braizaz, 2018; Lipton, 2021). Women, as gendered subjects, often face heightened scrutiny compared to men (Heffernan & Thomson, 2020). Notably, women are frequently judged based on their physical appearance in professional settings, a phenomenon less prevalent among men (Lipton, 2021). While numerous studies have explored the link between the bodily performance of academic women and gendered subjectivities (e.g., Heffernan & Thomson, 2020; Lipton, 2021), research specifically targeting Chinese academic women remains scarce. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the performative constitution of academic women's subjectivities through Butler's performativity theory. Additionally, it aims to explore how academic women navigate broader regulatory forces by performing femininity. Chinese academic women in this study often explicitly perform femininity, evident in their emphasis on appearance. Their gendered subjectivities are shaped by repetitive performances of femininity, which can be seen as the reproduction of heterosexuality. In this paper, I will present findings from a photovoice interview (Kara, 2015) with three Chinese academic women to illustrate how academics negotiate their academic subjectivity within the constraints of both feminine gender norms and institutional expectations of professionalism and authority. This paper sheds light on how academic women's bodies are influenced by societal and state ideals of the women's image in the Chinese context.

### Reference

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PARALLEL SESSIONS

# PARALLEL DISCUSSION GROUPS

## **DISCUSSION GROUP A**

Lecture theatre (G/F)

**Facilitator: Barbara Grant**

Melina Aarnikoivu  
Felicity Callard  
Robin David Carey  
Tsz Sum Chan  
Bethany Cox  
Postiglione Gerald  
Xiao Han  
Hugo Horta  
Zumrad Kataeva

Mako Kawano  
Gauri Khanna  
Lilly-Rose Saliba  
Amy Maclatchy  
Catherine Manathunga  
Gina Saliba  
Moonisah Usman  
Richard Watermeyer

## **DISCUSSION GROUP B**

Classroom NP-103 (1/F)

**Facilitator: Tai Peseta**

Collins Fleischner  
Man Ho Adrian Lam  
Soyoung Lee  
Ridita Mizan  
Kohei Okada  
Suyan Pan  
Nour Said  
Machi Sato

Taixing Shen  
Yuting Shen  
Huili Si  
Sean Sturm  
Shivani Suresh  
Hoa Tang  
Jack Tsao  
Xiaofan Zhang

## **DISCUSSION GROUP C**

Classroom NP-202 (2/F)

**Facilitator: Linlin Xu**

Sarah Aiston  
Colleen Aldous  
Eireann Attridge  
Roy Y. Chan  
Hung-Chang Chen  
Tina Fang Gao  
Jonah Henkle  
Angela Yung Chi Hou

Jisun Jung  
Xu Liu  
Marie-Pierre Moreau  
Christine Olando  
Yusuf Ikbal Oldac  
Mayesha Qurayshi  
Jung Cheol Shin  
Daixuan Xie

## **DISCUSSION GROUP D**

Classroom NP-302 (3/F)

**Facilitator: James Burford**

Julian Castaño Gallego  
Wing Tung Cheng  
Kun Dai

Mianmian Fei  
Futao Huang  
Matthieu Lafon



Angel M.Y. Lin  
Xueting Liu  
Sophie Nader  
Stella Ng  
Rosanne Quinnell  
Susan Rowland

Kathryn Sutherland  
Boya Yuan  
Ni Zhang  
Zhenzhou Zhao  
Tao Zou

## **DISCUSSION GROUP E**

Classroom NP-303 (3/F)

**Facilitator: Eva Bendix Petersen**

Fatima Alhaj Hasan  
Paul Campbell  
Sheng-Ju Chan  
Qinghua Chen  
Tracy Fortune  
Jennifer Fraser  
Tatiana Fumasoli  
Karri Holley

Roman Lashin  
Xiaoshi Li  
Bruce Macfarlane  
Federick Ngo  
Mariko Ono  
Li Tang  
Sangya Tyagi  
Yueyang Zheng

## **DISCUSSION GROUP F**

Classroom NP-304 (3/F)

**Facilitator: Weiyan Xiong**

Victoria Ankrah  
Kyra Araneta  
Amani Bell  
Yilin Chai  
Rifa Ferzana  
John Hannon  
Yuting Jia  
Ai Tam Le

Xiaoyuan Li  
Jason Cong Lin  
Yabing Liu  
Kirsten Locke  
Wenqin Shen  
Ju Wang  
Crista Weise  
Huaxin Yang

## **DISCUSSION GROUP G**

Multi-purpose room (G/F)

**Facilitator: Anatoly Oleksiyenko**

Sandra Clare  
Jeanette Fyffe  
Cally Guerin  
Yuxiao Jiang  
Frances Kelly  
Huan Li  
Fatima Maatwk  
Katrina McChesney  
Chi Wui Ng

Haoxi Ou  
Ana Rodas  
Phoebe Siu  
Sharon Stein  
Samuel Suresh  
Juliet Aleta Villanueva  
Mei Wu  
Tingting Zhang



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The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) is a publicly funded tertiary institution dedicated to the advancement of learning and teaching, through a diverse offering of academic and research programmes on teacher education and complementary social sciences and humanities disciplines.

We nurture educators and social leaders who are intellectually active, socially caring, and globally aware, to become agents of change in the communities that they serve. We place great emphasis on research capability – our research will contribute to the advancement of knowledge, scholarship and innovation, with sustainable impact on social progress and human betterment.

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The Centre for Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies (CHELPS) represents the first and only higher education centre in Hong Kong building relationships with others in Mainland China, East Asia and worldwide. CHELPS is led by Professor Bruce Macfarlane and Professor Anatoly Oleksiyenko and draws on expertise in higher education studies from across The EdUHK. CHELPS enhances the quality of research communication and collaborations while connecting scholars and innovative practitioners in the Greater Bay Area, Greater China, Asia, and the world. Our open access journals provide a platform for intellectual debate





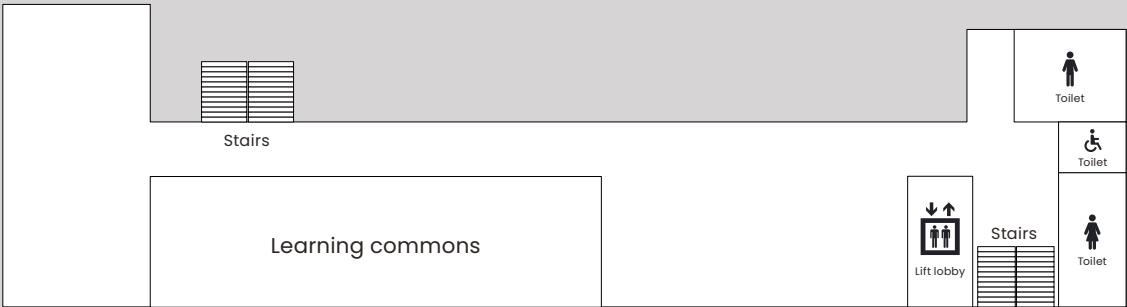
and exchange between higher education scholars worldwide. The Centre's academic and development programmes include a Master of Arts in Global Higher Education from September 2024, an executive higher education leadership programme, a summer institute, and an intellectual leadership programme. CHELPS welcomes international scholars and institutional leaders eager to learn from Chinese and Asian experiences, as well as building stronger research networks in the field of regional and global higher education.

## ABOUT FEHD

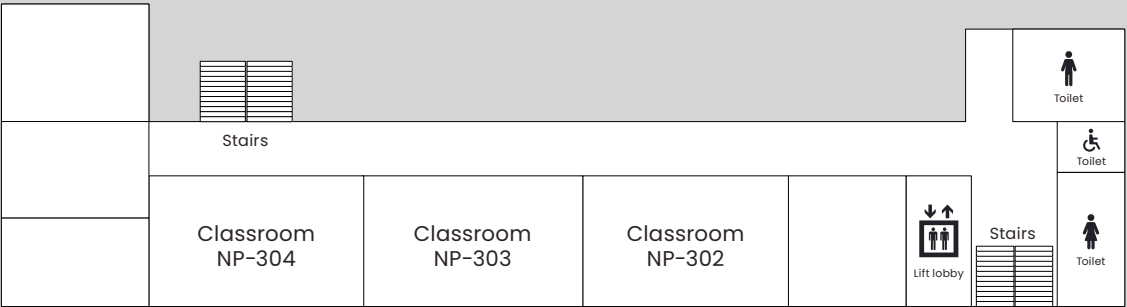
The Faculty of Education and Human Development (FEHD) is one of the three faculties here at The EdUHK. FEHD is the leading provider of educational courses and research at the University, and is proud to stand at the forefront of research into education and psychology. FEHD provides students with a wide array of specialisms, ranging from subjects as diverse as curriculum, educational leadership, psychology, global studies, speech therapy, and counselling and many more. FEHD has nurtured over 80% of local kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong, as well as over 20,000 professional educators, psychologists, counsellors, speech therapists, and more.

# VENUE FLOOR PLAN

4/F

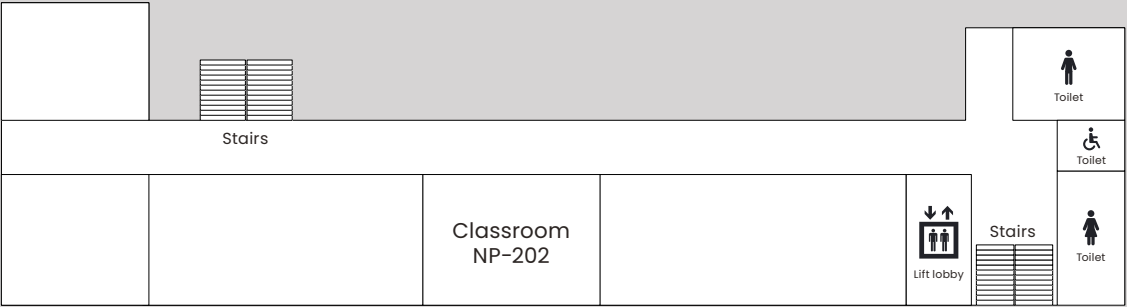


3/F

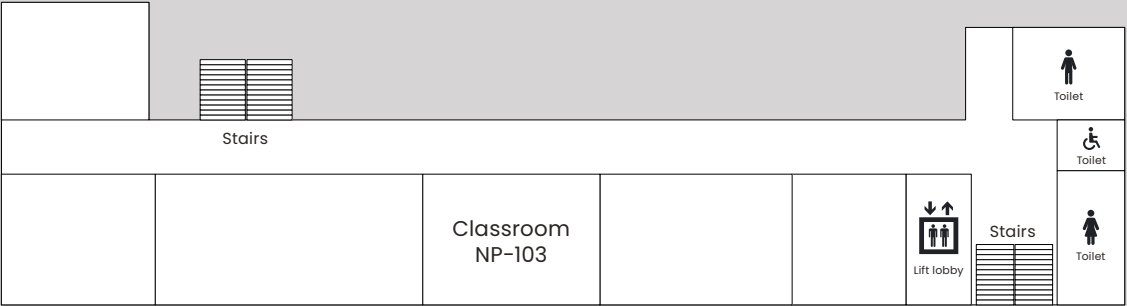


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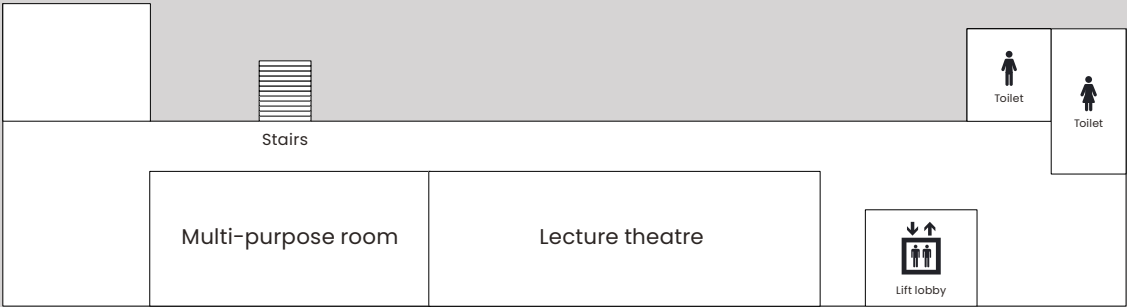
2/F



1/F



G/F



► The building entrance is located on the UG/F



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