

## **2A    *Sub-theme: Educational equity and justice***

Title: Is the west the best? How to promote truly global educational scholarship

Presenter: Prof Liz JACKSON (The University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

### **Purposes**

This essay considers the challenges of conducting educational research in East Asia that is truly global or international in perspective rather than western-oriented. Historically, many have viewed western social sciences and humanities fields underpinning educational research as superior to those methods and approaches that developed in East Asia. However, epistemic injustice is a risk when global scholars are continuously asked to be western-facing and appeal to western scholars to conduct high-quality scholarship. This presentation examines the historical and political factors involved in this promotion of western scholarship as global scholarship and ways to correct the unjust status quo that favors the west over the east.

### **Perspective and methods**

This project is based in philosophical analysis of relevant policies and frameworks involved in assessing high-quality educational research and teaching post-graduate students from a global perspective. It uses conceptual analysis and reflective equilibrium to develop original arguments about what is taking place, why it is problematic, and how the situation can be improved.

### **Conclusions**

There are a number of historical factors leading to the unequal regard for approaches and lenses developed in western countries over those in East Asia. These include the history of colonization and imperialism, the greater openness of colleagues to international perspectives in East Asia in comparison with the sense of superiority and lack of understanding in western academia, and the reliance on assessment frameworks and educational research guides that promote western views as global exemplars. This project spreads awareness about the situation and makes recommendations for promoting truly global educational scholarship in universities in East Asia in terms of the research and teaching conduct of doctoral students and academics.

**2B Sub-theme: Educational equity and justice**

Title: The Role of Teachers in Holistic Development: Fostering Non-Academic Growth for Left-Behind Children in Rural Areas

Presenter: Ms Jiahe HU (The Education University of Hong Kong)

**Abstract:**

This article examines the critical role of teachers in fostering the holistic development of children, specifically addressing non-academic growth among left-behind children (LBC) in rural China. Due to economic disparities and labor migration patterns, many parents relocate to urban areas, leaving their children under the care of relatives, often grandparents. These children face unique challenges in their social-emotional, mental health, and physical development due to prolonged parental absence. Research highlights that left-behind children often suffer from issues such as delays in physical growth, increased rates of depression, low self-esteem, vulnerability to bullying, and inadequate social skills. Such noticeable developmental gaps require authorities' attention and targeted intervention strategies. Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Attachment Theory, the paper emphasizes the significance of positive teacher-student relationships and supportive classroom environments. Teachers not only impact students academically but also profoundly influence their social-emotional and interpersonal skills, which is especially important for children who are left behind in rural areas.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of equipping teachers with emotional literacy skills and enhancing their self-efficacy through specialized training programs. Drawing from personal involvement with the Electronic Classroom Project (ECP) in Chongqing, this paper provides insights into innovative teaching methods, such as storytelling and role-playing, to effectively address the non-academic needs of LBC. Additionally, professional development programs tailored to both online and onsite educators are highlighted as essential in empowering teachers to meet these children's unique needs. It argues for a comprehensive approach to fulfill the unique educational needs among LBC communities, emphasizing emotional well-being, social competence, and social-emotional learning alongside academic achievement. Through ongoing reflection and improvements in teacher training and curriculum development, educators can better support the holistic development of left-behind children.



## 2C *Sub-theme: Educational equity and justice*

Title: Bridging the Digital Divide for Educational Justice: Challenges and Innovations in Achieving SDG4 for Developing Countries

Presenter: Ms FANG Jingning (The Education University of Hong Kong)

### Abstract:

This study investigates how the digital divide exacerbates educational inequality in developing countries, undermining progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). It aims to identify systemic barriers and propose actionable strategies to align digital education initiatives with SDG4's equity-driven targets.

### Theoretical Framework

Grounded in Amartya Sen's "capability approach" and critical "technology justice" perspectives, the analysis frames digital inequity as a multidimensional deprivation of educational rights. It integrates SDG4's monitoring framework to evaluate gaps between policy aspirations and on-the-ground realities.

### Methods

A mixed-methods approach combines:

1. Comparative case studies: Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on Indonesia, Ghana, and Tanzania.
2. Quantitative analysis: UNESCO's SDG4 datasets (2020–2024) and World Bank infrastructure surveys.
3. Critical discourse analysis: National digital education policies.

### Data Sources

Primary: National education ministry reports, field interviews with teachers/NGOs.

Secondary: UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Reports (2024), World Bank's Digital Dividends datasets, African Development Bank case studies.

### Findings

1. Three-tiered inequality: Digital disparities operate through infrastructure (32% rural vs. 89% urban schools with stable internet), skills (<20% teachers trained for hybrid instruction), and content (Western-dominated platforms neglecting local languages/cultures).
2. Policy-practice gaps: Technocentric initiatives (e.g., India's Digital Blackboard Program) often prioritize hardware over contextual adaptability, worsening exclusion.
3. Successful innovations: Hybrid low-tech models (e.g., Ghana's offline USB curriculum) significantly improved marginalized students' access while costing 60% less than tablet-based programs.

### Implications

To reclaim SDG4's equity mandate, policymakers must:

1. Redesign digital indicators to prioritize accessibility over connectivity metrics.
2. Establish global funding mechanisms for localized EdTech solutions.
3. Empower communities as co-designers of digital education systems.

## **2D    *Sub-theme: Higher education internationalization and student mobility***

Title: Educated for the Greater Bay Area? Exploring Macao Students' Career Aspirations and Trajectories of Integration

Presenters:

Dr Xiaoyuan LI (City University of Macau) and  
Dr Kun DAI (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

This study investigates the tensions embedded in Macao students' educational trajectories and career aspirations amid the Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiative's promise of regional and national integration. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 28 Macao students in mainland Chinese universities, the research employs Giddens's structuration theory to analyze how students navigate the GBA initiative in their career planning. While the GBA's economic and policy frameworks initially attract students to mainland institutions — often located beyond the GBA itself — their post-graduation plans frequently prioritize returning to Macao or the Cantonese-speaking GBA. This paradoxical mobility reflects cultural affinities with Lingnan identity, familial ties, and the SAR's favorable migration policies, which simultaneously empower and circumscribe their trajectories beyond the GBA. Findings reveal the GBA's dual role as an inclusive driver of educational mobility and an exclusive boundary reinforcing ethno-regional belonging, exposing contradictions in China's national integration project. Students' aspirations, mediated by Macao's postcolonial hybridity and the mainland's meritocratic modernity, challenge the GBA's vision of seamless integration, underscoring tensions between regionalization and localized identities. The study argues that Macao students' career decisions reflect a pragmatic negotiation of belonging, where the GBA operates as both a geopolitical aspiration and a socio-cultural limit. Practical implications call for policies addressing the disjuncture between students' mobility aspirations and the GBA's integrationist rhetoric, while theoretical contributions critique linear models of regionalization in higher education.

Keywords: Macao students; mainland universities; Greater Bay Area (GBA); structuration; career planning



**2E    *Sub-theme: Higher education internationalization and student mobility***

Title: Only Number Matters? The Analytics of Government in China's International Student Education Policies

Presenter: Dr HAN Xiao Ivy (The Education University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

The examination of disciplinary system in China, in this case the evaluation criteria for the administrators' performance in higher education institutions (HEIs), could thus better explain the co-existed central control and local innovation/creativity during policy enactment, especially the consistent prioritizing of quantity over quality in international students' introduction, which, in effect, neither contributes to the national plan nor caters for the local interest.

**2F Sub-theme: Higher education internationalization and student mobility**

Title: Intercultural competence in the context of China's higher education: A systematic review of student IC assessment and development in the past 20 years

Presenter: Ms KANG JINGDAN (The Education University of Hong Kong) [Online]

Abstract:

Research Interest: Intercultural competence; International students mobility and adaptation; China-Foreign cooperation running school

Intercultural competence (IC) has been considered as a pivotal soft skill in the internationalized higher education landscape. While there is a pressing need for higher education institutions to develop and assess students' IC, the empirical studies in the context of China are inadequate. This research aims to systematically review current academic research in the scope of assessment and development of students' IC in the context of China's higher education. The research objective is to gain insight into the overall level of tertiary-level students. It also explores the categories of interventions used by teachers to promote students' IC levels and the effectiveness of those interventions. The researcher adopts systematic literature review (PRISMA) as a research method, screening relevant articles from WoS, Scopus and CNKI databases in the past 20 years. Thematic analysis is used to analyse data and draw conclusions. These findings reveal that Chinese university students demonstrate low-level IC. The intervention categories are specific teaching materials, activities and designed workshops or programs. This study concludes that current Chinese students' IC level is unsatisfied and intervention types are limited. Therefore, further studies are expected to explore students' IC levels in different settings. Education practitioners and researchers conduct diverse types of interventions and examine the effectiveness of interventions.



**2G Sub-theme: Educational equity and justice**

Title: On the verge of 'post-secondary education-for-all' and deficit thinking: teachers' paradoxical identities towards minority students in Hong Kong

Presenters: Dr Jan GUBE & Dr Tina GAO (The Education University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

This research examined cross-border Hong Kong students' access to and accumulation of campus-based social capital (CBSC), and its influences upon their university navigation and persistence. The data of interviews and network maps, collected from ten Hong Kong students in a Mainland university located in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) suggested that their distinct peer networks were based on the complex mixture of Cantonese speaker identity and origin of place. Associated with the friendship ties was the pastoral care received from university counsellors, who sometimes also assumed an intermediary role in steering the participants toward valued resources. These campus-based social networks complemented existing home-based relations and together created a home away from home. However, a lack of networking with wider university faculty and domestic students negatively impacted their border-crossing learning and socialising experiences, contrary to the Chinese government's policy and efforts to integrate Hong Kong youth into Mainland China.

## **2H    *Sub-theme: Educational equity and justice***

Title: Social Equity Challenges and Strategies in Rural Chinese Primary Schools

Presenter: Ms ZHANG Jiahui (The Education University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

Purpose: The study will explore the social equity problems confronting Chinese rural primary school teachers and the strategies set by school leaders to lessen these challenges. Another objective of this research is to look at the policies initiated to promote social equity between rural and urban schools in China. In light of this, the study will look at these aspects for insight into how effective the equity-building strategies and policies have been while pointing out areas where improvement is needed.

Theoretical framework: Paulo Freire critical pedagogy

Method: Mix

Quantitative for surveys and questionnaires, qualitative methods research for interviews and focus groups

Data sources: literature review

Findings: Based on this, this study anticipates that primary school teachers in rural areas of China mainly face inequities in resource allocation, professional development, and student learning opportunities. At the same time, it is also expected that rural school leaders will face the difficulties positively and adopt appropriate strategies to overcome them. In addition, the paper's analyses suggest that although policies aimed at improving educational equity in rural areas exist, they are not standardised, and rural schools are often hampered by structural barriers that prevent them from fully benefiting from these initiatives. Policymakers and educators can use this research to design more precise interventions to meet the specific needs of rural schools, improve educational outcomes, and promote social equity.



## **21 Sub-theme: Educational equity and justice**

Title: A narrative inquiry into the ethical identity of exemplary Filipino teachers: Teaching as a vocation, *kaloób* and *pakikipagkapwa*

Presenter: Ms CONTRERAS, Eunice Tan (The Education University of Hong Kong)

### **Abstract:**

The consecutive dismal performance of the Philippines on PISA has put the spotlight on the quality of teachers, purported to be the most important in raising student outcomes. Consequently, there is an increasing push from different stakeholders to recruit the best and the brightest for pre-service teacher education programs. In this paper, I respond to the question of what makes a quality teacher by examining the life stories of exemplary teachers. Informed by Hansen's (2021) notion of the call to teach and indigenous Filipino psychology, this narrative research ultimately explored the ethical identity of exemplary Filipino teachers, guided by the following questions: How does the call to teach emerge in Filipino teachers' lives?, How does the call to teach manifest in their stories?, and How is the call to teach expressed in practice? Despite teacher identity being recognized as sustaining commitment to teaching their best and well (Day, 2021), teacher identity scholarship within the Global South context is considerably limited (Rushton et al., 2023). This paper addressed this gap by focusing on three teachers working in Philippine public schools, thereby allowing for a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and lived experiences of teachers in such underexplored contexts. The teachers' narratives highlight that a teacher's ethical identity, shaped by life experiences and ongoing teacher practice, is essential for exemplary teaching. In particular, the teachers' stories reveal a not-necessarily-inborn call to teach that continues to fuel their exemplary practice, manifesting in a *kapwa* ethical orientation in relating with students. I argue that predicating teaching excellence on prior academic results or leadership potential, no matter how helpful, overlooks a key aspect of teacher quality. I suggest that attention to ethical dispositions in prospective teacher recruitment and developing such ethical identity in the teacher education program are worthwhile efforts in achieving quality education.

Keywords: teachers, life story, identity, ethics, Philippine teacher education

## **2J Sub-theme: Higher education internationalization and student mobility**

Title: Policy innovation and future imaginaries of higher education internationalisation: New ideas for the grand strategy of China's Greater Bay Area

Presenters:

Dr Yingxin Liu (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen and  
Dr Hei-hang Hayes Tang (The Education University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

Future imaginaries shape the policy innovations that guide universities in their approaches to internationalisation. China's Greater Bay Area (GBA) represents a transformative grand strategy aimed at fostering a regional innovation system through knowledge creation, cross-boundary collaboration, and the cultivation of high-quality talent via inward-oriented higher education internationalisation. This paper investigates how innovative universities within the GBA construct future imaginaries of internationalisation, and the way in which they communicate these images and imaginaries to stakeholders. Employing a multiple case study approach, the study focuses on two innovative GBA universities, utilising discourse analysis of institutional policies and social media, complemented by semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. Findings reveal that these universities align their internationalisation imaginaries with a state-directed vision that emphasises political, diplomatic, and cultural partnerships over entrepreneurial motives. Unlike Anglo-Saxon models influenced by neoliberalism and academic entrepreneurialism, China's approach leverages higher education as a tool for cultural diplomacy and soft power, promoting Chinese characteristics in a multipolar, multicultural world. This research contributes to reimagining indigenous higher education internationalisation, offering insights into how future imaginaries guide policy innovation and approaches to higher education internationalisation. By situating university practices within national frameworks, the study underscores the interplay between state-led visions and institutional agency in advancing the regional innovation ecosystem.



**2K Sub-theme: Higher education internationalization and student mobility**

Title: Bridging Borders, Building Futures: Cross-Border Education as a Maternal Strategy for Intergenerational Mobility

Presenter:

Ms LIU Jing (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Dr Kun DAI (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

This article explores the experiences of Mainland Chinese mother-students who reside in Shenzhen and commute to Hong Kong for postgraduate studies. The unique geographical proximity of Shenzhen and Hong Kong facilitates daily or weekly cross-border commuting, which plays an important role in these mothers' educational strategies. For these women, cross-border education is not only a personal opportunity but also a key strategy to enhance their children's future educational prospects. By navigating the complexities of dual roles—as graduate students and educational brokers—they work to secure Hong Kong school placements for their children while maintaining jobs and family life in Shenzhen. Through 12 narrative interviews, the article uncovers the stories of international students balancing academic aspirations with long-term family goals. It reveals how these women make decisions regarding cross-border study and addresses the challenges they face in managing academic and family responsibilities. The article analyzes how their motivations evolve in response to the uncertainties and adjustments encountered during their academic journeys. Framed within Bourdieu's thinking tools of capital and social reproduction, the analysis deepens our understanding of how cross-border mobility between Shenzhen and Hong Kong influences both personal and familial trajectories. It theorizes this academic commute as a spatial tactic for intergenerational social reproduction, offering fresh insights into family-centered educational strategies for international students.

## **2L Sub-theme: Higher education internationalization and student mobility**

Title: Whose Language Counts? Language Policy as Identity Pedagogy: Mandarin Promotion and Portuguese Preservation in Macau's Schools

Presenter: Ms WANG Yifei (The University of Macau)

### Abstract:

As multilingualism gains global recognition in education policy, the challenge of balancing national language integration with local linguistic identities has become increasingly urgent. Macau, a Special Administrative Region of China, offers a compelling yet under-examined case where four official and semi-official languages — Mandarin, Cantonese, Portuguese, and English — coexist within a postcolonial, post-handover educational landscape. While Mandarin promotion aligns with national integration goals, the symbolic protection of Cantonese and Portuguese reflects both local legacy and cultural pluralism. How does language education shape students' identity formation in the multilingual school environment? To explore this question, this research conducted field research in multiple secondary schools across Macau, combining classroom observations with semi-structured interviews, to examine how language education can be interpreted, negotiated, or even resisted in the everyday practices of schooling. Our findings reveal a dual-layered linguistic reality. While Mandarin has increasingly become the institutional language of instruction, especially in schools aligned with national curricula or mainland affiliations, Cantonese remains the dominant language of peer interaction. This shift, however, is uneven across school types and often met with ambivalence. Importantly, the ability to speak Cantonese fluently acts as a cultural boundary marker: local and non-local students are informally stratified by their competence in the local language, revealing tensions between imposed national identity and grassroots cultural belonging. This points to a broader challenge of language sustainability under policies that promote surface-level multilingualism but lack systemic integration. By situating Macau's case within broader debates in language education and comparative education, this paper underscores the need for more culturally responsive and context-sensitive language policies.