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A Quantitative Survey Comparing Student Competencies between the IB Diploma Programme and Traditional High School Programmes in Japan

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Purpose

In 2023, Japan marked the tenth anniversary of the introduction of dual-language International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes, implemented through a formal agreement between the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Today, more than 200 IB-related programmes—including authorized and candidate schools—are offered across all school levels in Japan. The initial baseline study on the Japanese dual-language IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) was conducted in 2015 with support from four schools and presented at CIES 2016.

That study highlighted high student expectations and satisfaction, particularly in relation to global education. However, due to the limited number of students and the novelty of the programme at the time, the findings were exploratory. Now, a decade later, this study aims to quantitatively examine the competencies acquired by students in IBDP schools in Japan. Drawing on data from a national survey conducted in 2024—commissioned by MEXT under the project "Research on the Educational Effects of the IB"—we analyzed student responses regarding their high school learning experiences. To contextualize this study within the broader development of IB in Japan, it is worth noting that the initial baseline survey conducted by Yamamoto et al. (2016) under the International Baccalaureate Organization provided foundational insights into the expectations and challenges faced by early adopters of the IBDP in Japanese schools. Building on this groundwork, our current study aims to capture longitudinal trends and broader patterns of student growth across a significantly expanded sample. This extended scope allows for more generalizable findings and provides an opportunity to examine how institutional and policy changes over the past decade may have shaped student outcomes within IB and non-IB environments alike.

Methodology

Students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP students) and those enrolled in the Japanese national curriculum at the same schools (non-DP students) were included as participants. The same set of questions was administered to both groups to examine similarities and differences. The questionnaire included items on a variety of topics: learning experiences, use of time in daily life, everyday habits and attitudes (to assess competencies), self-assessed abilities, future career aspirations, demographics, social and family environment, and prior learning experiences. The survey was conducted between April and May 2024 with second-year students from 31 upper secondary schools offering the IBDP in Japan. A mixed-mode approach using both paper-

based and online questionnaires was adopted. A total of 1,794 valid responses were collected (443 DP students and 1,351 non-DP students).

Results

The primary focus of the study was on differences in competencies between the two groups. The main analytical dataset included 33 items on students' daily behaviors and attitudes, and 22 items on self-assessed abilities, all rated on a five-point Likert scale. These items were based on the question set developed in the baseline study by IBO and have since been refined by the current research team. The baseline questionnaire was designed based on international frameworks such as the OECD Learning Compass and the IBO Learner Profile. To ensure cultural relevance for non-DP students, Japanese frameworks—including MEXT's "Zest for Life," the "Bachelor's Degree Qualification," and METI's "Basic Competencies for Working Persons"—were also referenced. These competencies were reorganized and refined to capture not only academic outcomes but also behaviors and attitudes emphasized in international education. Factor analysis (maximum likelihood with Promax rotation) was conducted separately for the two groups. Nearly identical factor structures emerged, resulting in the extraction of nine factors interpreted as domains of competencies: teamwork, problem-solving, understanding of diversity, reflection, willingness to take on challenges, planning ability, academic engagement, physical well-being, and stress tolerance. To ensure comparability, 25 common items were retained across both groups. Mean scores were calculated and compared. Except for "physical well-being," DP students scored significantly higher in all domains ($p < .001$). The highest mean scores were observed for "understanding of diversity," "problem-solving," and "teamwork," in that order—consistently across both groups. These competencies are highly valued in IB and international education, and both groups appear to demonstrate positive outcomes in these areas. Notably, the largest score difference was found in "academic engagement," which also had the lowest overall mean in both groups. Interestingly, many non-DP students reported spending significant time on study, yet felt they were not making a strong effort—an observation that may reflect a unique characteristic of the Japanese educational context.

A similar factor analysis was conducted for self-assessed abilities. Eight factors were extracted: three subject-specific domains (mathematics and science, English, Japanese and social studies) and five general skill domains (functioning as a member of an organization, acquisition of knowledge and skills, problem-solving ability, interpersonal competence, and teamwork ability). DP students scored significantly higher across all domains. The largest differences were found in English and in mathematics and science ($p < .001$), while the difference in Japanese and social studies was minimal, though statistically significant ($p < .05$). The higher English scores were expected. However, the relatively high self-assessments in mathematics and science among DP students may reflect the structure of Japanese upper secondary education, in which advanced courses in these subjects are typically chosen only by students with strong academic aptitude. In contrast, IB students are required to engage in these subjects, potentially contributing to greater self-confidence. The factor analysis results showed that the overall competency structure was nearly identical between groups. However, DP students consistently demonstrated higher scores across competencies. That said, certain behaviors and attitudes widely regarded as socially desirable—such as communication,

empathy, and a sense of responsibility—were statistically indistinguishable from other factors, likely due to their universal presence. This limitation will be addressed in future research. Longitudinal studies are planned to refine the competency structure and analyze it in greater detail. In our conference presentation, we plan to present extended findings by incorporating additional data collected from third-year high school students (Grade 12) between September and December 2024 (a total of 1,760 responses: 394 DP students and 1,366 non-DP students). These results will enable a grade-progression analysis.

Based on preliminary observations, we expect to find larger differences at Grade 12, as the Grade 11 results reflect the performance of students who have only recently begun the IB programme. In Japan, the conventional university entrance examination system has been increasingly questioned for prioritizing test-oriented learning. The IB may offer new directions in response to such criticisms. Furthermore, in our forthcoming discussion, we aim to explore additional explanatory factors such as student characteristics and university entrance strategies, which may provide deeper insights into the emerging patterns.

[Note] This study is commissioned by MEXT (PI: Teruyuki FUJITA, University of Tsukuba). We express our sincere gratitude to all participating schools and staff for their cooperation, and to the members of our research team: Sayaka Mitarai, Aktolkyn Rustemova, Akari Fuji for their contribution in the survey implementation and discussion.

Educational Development and Minority Schooling: Spatial Differentiation of Chinese Primary Education in Malaysia, 1980–2022

WANG Weilin & GAN Yongtao

This study delves into the spatial dynamics of Chinese primary education in Malaysia, focusing on Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJKC) from 1980 to 2022. As a unique example of ethnolinguistic resilience in a multicultural society, Malaysian Chinese education represents a minority schooling system that has persisted despite national policies favoring Malay-centric integration. The research employs spatial autocorrelation analysis, including Global and Local Moran's I, to examine the spatiotemporal evolution of student enrollment, identify agglomeration patterns, and uncover socio-economic, demographic, and policy drivers. By analyzing longitudinal data from the Malaysian Ministry of Education, the study reveals a persistent lack of significant global spatial autocorrelation, indicating a random national distribution. However, robust local patterns emerge, characterized by a "dual-core, peripheral decline" structure, with distinct clusters such as High-High (HH) hot spots, Low-High (LH) low-lying areas, High-Low (HL) island areas, and Low-Low (LL) cold spots. These findings highlight the limitations of uniform national policies and advocate for regionally differentiated approaches, drawing lessons from Sarawak's autonomy. The research contributes to comparative education by illustrating how minority systems navigate demographic shifts and political economies, offering insights for preserving ethnolinguistic identity in diverse societies.

Background and Research Significance

Malaysia's Chinese primary education system is exceptional globally, being the only comprehensive Chinese-language schooling outside Greater China. Rooted in 19th-century colonial migrations and sustained by community efforts, SJKCs have evolved amid post-independence nation-building efforts that prioritize Malay as the national language. Despite challenges, including the 1961 and 1996 Education Acts, which institutionalized national curricula while allowing vernacular persistence, SJKCs have maintained cultural significance for the Chinese minority. However, national aggregates mask spatial complexities: the total number of SJKCs declined slightly from 1,316 in 1980 to 1,296 in 2022, yet enrollment patterns show concentration in urban cores like Selangor and Johor, contrasted by declines in peripheral states such as Perak and the East Coast. A key paradox drives this inquiry: while global spatial autocorrelation remains non-significant, local patterns exhibit stable differentiation. This suggests that macro-policies do not uniformly affect Chinese education; instead, local socio-economic factors and community responses shape trajectories. The study addresses four research questions: (1) How has the spatiotemporal evolution of SJKC student scale changed from 1980 to 2022? (2) What are the spatial agglomeration patterns and their categorizations? (3) What socio-economic, demographic, and policy factors drive these patterns? (4) What policy recommendations support sustainable development, particularly for multilingual nations? This work advances educational geography by applying time-series spatial analysis to minority education, bridging gaps in literature that often relies on static snapshots. It integrates theories of agglomeration economies (Marshall, 2013; Krugman, 1992) and core-periphery models (Myrdal's backwash effects) to explain how urban clustering benefits SJKCs in cores while peripheral diseconomies lead to decline. Politically, it examines the role of ethnic activism (e.g., Dongjiaozong) and demographic shifts, such as the rise in non-Chinese enrollment from 3-6% in the 1990s to 20% by 2020, driven by perceptions of academic rigor and Mandarin's global value amid China's rise.

Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review

The analysis is grounded in spatial theories emphasizing agglomeration benefits—shared resources, knowledge spillovers, and labor matching—and diseconomies like congestion. In education, these manifest as urban SJKCs attracting diverse students, while peripherals suffer resource competition. Core-periphery dynamics explain siphon effects, where cores like Selangor draw families from states like Negeri Sembilan, reinforcing inequality. Empirical studies (e.g., Elias & Rey, 2011; Azies & Nasution, 2021) support using Moran's I for detecting educational clustering, applied here longitudinally. Politically, Chinese education reflects Malaysia's ethnic tensions: post-independence policies aimed at assimilation, yet community resistance preserved SJKCs. Recent trends include non-Chinese influx, creating a "saved yet threatened" paradox—sustaining schools but risking cultural dilution through adaptations like halal facilities. Geopolitically, Mandarin's prestige enhances SJKC appeal, paralleling global minority language resilience (Cressie & Moores, 2021). Spatial analytics, based on Tobler's First Law, enable detection of clusters, advancing beyond descriptive metrics in prior Malaysian studies.

Methodology
The study covers all 13 Malaysian states and two federal territories (15 units total), using annual SJKC student data from 1980-2022 (Malaysian Ministry of Education). Data was standardized for comparability. A Queen's Case spatial weight matrix defined adjacency, maximizing interaction capture to test for global patterns. Global Moran's I assessed overall autocorrelation, while Local Moran's I (LISA) identified clusters via quadrants: HH, LH, LL, HL. GeoDa software computed indices, with significance at p<0.05. Limitations include state-level granularity, potentially masking intra-state variations, suggesting future sub-state analyses.

Key Findings
Spatial Distribution and Evolution Results indicate a "dual-core, peripheral decline" structure. Cores (Johor, Selangor) grew, with Selangor's students rising from 65,000 (1980) to 107,000 (2022), driven by economic vibrancy. Peripherals like Perak declined sharply (107,000 to 40,000), linked to Chinese population drops. Sabah exceptionally grew (26,000 to 35,000), fueled by immigration and 25% non-Chinese enrollment, highlighting adaptation potential. Global Moran's I was consistently negative (-0.039 to -0.135) but insignificant (p>0.05), denoting random national distribution without large-scale clustering. This implies internal state factors (e.g., urbanization, demographics) dominate over inter-state spillovers, diluting uniform policy impacts. Local patterns, however, were robust. In 1980, Penang showed HH clustering (I=0.660, p=0.045), emerging as a core. By 2022, patterns evolved: Perak as potential HH (weak synergy with Penang/Selangor); East Coast states (Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis) as LL cold spots (low enrollment, p~0.08-0.095); cores like Selangor/Johor as HL islands (high values amid low surroundings); and Negeri Sembilan as LH low-lying (decline amid high neighbors, I=-0.314, p=0.019). Evolutionary phases include: (1) 1980's core-periphery germination; (2) 1992-2000's weakening cores and emerging low-lying effects; (3) 2000-2022's solidification of polarization, with East Coast cold belts strengthening due to migration and policy restrictions. Sarawak maintained HL resilience via autonomy, contrasting peninsular volatility.

Discussion
Drivers and Implications Spatial inertia stems from urbanization, economic gradients, and policy unevenness. Cores benefit from agglomeration, but peripheries face backwash, creating poverty traps akin to those in China (Wu & Kc, 2022). Sarawak's MA63 autonomy insulates it, suggesting decentralized models for resilience. Demographic shifts—declining Chinese birthrates and non-Chinese influx—pose identity dilemmas, balancing preservation with inclusion. The study critiques uniform policies, advocating regional differentiation: e.g., immigration incentives like Sabah's for peripherals, or autonomy extensions. It contributes to international education by modeling minority system adaptation in plural societies.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations
Malaysian Chinese education embodies spatial equity challenges in multicultural contexts. Global randomness masks local polarization, necessitating tailored governance. Recommendations include: (1) regionally differentiated policies, emulating Sarawak; (2) incentives for non-Chinese enrollment to sustain peripherals without cultural erosion; (3)

finer-grained data for district-level interventions. Future research should integrate qualitative ethnographies with spatial analytics to explore adaptation dynamics, ensuring ethnolinguistic vitality amid globalization.

Understanding IB Education in Government-Approved Schools in Japan: Insights from the 2024 Basic Survey

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1. Introduction and background

This study aims to clarify the characteristics of government-approved (Article 1) schools in Japan that have implemented the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme, addressing three key questions. (1) What types of Article 1 schools have become IB-authorized institutions in Japan? (2) What are the attributes of teachers working at these schools, including their participation in professional development and acquisition of IB-related qualifications? (3) What are the characteristics of IB students, such as their enrollment patterns, subject selection, and completion rates? The IB programme was established after World War II to promote peace through intercultural understanding, international mindedness, and critical thinking. Founded in 1968 in Switzerland and administered by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), the IB has since expanded worldwide. The IB educational programmes are divided into three stages based on age: the Primary Years Programme (PYP) for children aged 3 to 12, the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students aged 11 to 16, and the Diploma Programme (DP) for students aged 16 to 19. The DP is a two-year programme corresponding to the second and third years of high school. Students in the DP are required to select one subject from each of six subject groups: Languages and Literature, Language Acquisition, Individuals and Societies, Sciences, Mathematics, and Arts. Of these, three to four subjects must be taken at Higher Level, with the remainder at Standard Level. This structure ensures a broad liberal arts education covering humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, regardless of the student's chosen specialization. As of 2025, over 6,000 IB World Schools operate in 162 countries. The IB has been introduced for diverse purposes—promoting educational equity in the United States (Ebata 2020, Ebata 2023), enriching elite education in Singapore, diversifying education in Poland (Leek J. 2020, Leek J. 2024), internationalising education in Hong Kong, and fostering inquiry-based learning in Korea (Lee M., Kim H. and Wright E. 2021). The case of Japan presents yet another distinct trajectory. Introduced in 2013 under the government's Project for the Promotion of Global Human Resource Development, the IB initiative aimed to expand to 200 schools by 2018 (Cabinet, 2013). This target was ostensibly achieved in 2023, with each program counted as one school; for example, a school offering both the MYP and the DP was counted as two schools, including candidate schools as well. As of 2025, there are 268 IB schools in Japan, of which 75 offer DP. Although the number of IB-authorized schools in Japan has increased through government initiatives, empirical research on how the IB is implemented in Article 1 schools remains limited (Yamamoto et al 2016, Shibuya 2020, Mitarai et al 2024). In particular, little is known about the types of Japanese schools that have adopted the IB, the teachers responsible for IB subjects, the number of students enrolled and obtaining the qualification. Therefore, this study analyzes the results of a survey conducted among Article 1 schools authorized to offer the IBDP in Japan.

2. Data and methods

This study is based on data from the School Basic Survey conducted between January and March 2024 as part of a project on "Educational Impact of IB in Japan" supported by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). A fact-finding survey was distributed via online form and email to 45 government-approved (state and private) IBDP schools in Japan and was completed by 42 schools. In addition, school-specific confirmations were conducted by phone and e-mail at 10 schools in May, at 7 schools each in June and July 2025. These surveys enabled the collection, organization, and analysis of basic data on school contexts as well as on the characteristics of IB teachers and student enrollment.

3. Main results

Analyzing the results of a single-year survey of Article 1 IB schools in Japan, several common themes were identified regarding the distinctive features of schools, teachers, and students. Approximately half of all IB-introducing schools had already implemented curricula and programs that reflected their distinctive characteristics before or at the time of IB introduction. Examples of such initiatives designated by MEXT include the Special Exception School System of Curriculums (Kyoikukatei tokureikou seido), Super Science High School (SSH), and Super Global High School (SGH) programs, which promote flexible curriculum design and implementation. The Special Special Exception School System of Curriculums encourages innovative teaching by allowing schools to develop and implement curricula beyond the National Curriculum Guidelines. The SSH program aims to foster future leaders in science and technology by cultivating advanced scientific inquiry and analytical skills, while the SGH program seeks to nurture globally minded leaders through education that deepens understanding of social issues and enhances communication, problem-solving, and intercultural competencies. By integrating the IB curriculum into the educational programs of Article 1 schools which were previously based on the Course of Study (Gakushu shudouyouryou), it has become possible to offer a broader curriculum that reflects a global perspective and aligns with the international context promoted by MEXT. Moreover, combining each school's unique characteristics with the strengths of the IB curriculum has enabled the implementation of more diverse and flexible educational programs. Currently, 36 out of 42 government-approved schools in Japan offer the Dual Language Diploma Programme (DLDP), a framework that provides instruction in both Japanese and English and plays a central role in this expansion. Under the DLDP framework, at least 2 subjects must be taught in English, Spanish, or French. The choice of language and the design of subjects taught in that language are determined by each school, taking into account its context and students' needs. Language plays a vital role not only in self-expression and the development of cultural identity but also in fostering intercultural understanding. It serves as a key medium of social communication and is closely connected to cognitive growth. It was observed that science-oriented subjects and art are more frequently offered in English than humanities-oriented ones. IB schools in Japan have also introduced a system in which certain DP subjects can be recognized as equivalent to credits required for completion of Japanese high school education. In Japan, many public school teachers are employed by local government boards rather than individual schools, which means they are periodically transferred to other public schools; the timing of these transfers varies by case. In accordance with IB requirements, participation in IBO

workshops is partially mandatory for IB teachers. According to the survey results, DP teachers account for 634 out of 3,911 teachers, representing 16.2% of the total. Among them, 266 teachers (41.9%) participated in International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) workshops in 2023, while only 40 teachers (6.3%) hold an IB Educator Certificate (IBEC). Building on the profile of IB teachers, the enrollment patterns, subject selection, and completion rates of DP students indicate that participation in the DP in Article 1 schools remains relatively limited. As of 2023, data from 42 surveyed schools show that 728 second-year students (6.6%) and 628 third-year students (6.0%) were enrolled in the DP, representing less than 10% of the total student population in each grade. The most common cohort size was between 11 and 20 students (47.6%), while 38.1% of schools had fewer than 10 students in the second year. Notably, in the third year, half of the schools reported 10 or fewer students enrolled. These figures suggest that DP implementation in Article 1 schools remains in an experimental phase, often limited to selective introduction within each institution. In 2023, a total of 475 students completed the DP across 35 schools, with 369 students (77.7%) successfully earning the IB Diploma. The number of graduates per school varied widely, with most institutions having either small cohorts of 1 to 5 students or medium-sized cohorts of 21 to 30, reflecting substantial differences in programme scale among schools.

4. Discussion

Based on the survey results, this study identified some key characteristics of government-approved IB schools, IB teachers, and DP students in Japan. Many Article 1 schools authorized to offer the IB had already been engaged in distinctive or globally oriented programs, such as SSH, SGH, and WWL schools. Their prior focus on internationalization and inquiry-based learning facilitated IB adoption and alignment with existing educational visions. The findings illustrate how the IB has been integrated into Japan's education system, creating opportunities for internationalized and inquiry-based learning while simultaneously highlighting existing institutional constraints. For example, recent efforts by MEXT to increase the number of IB schools have contributed to their growth, and the IB is often introduced in connection with programs schools were already implementing, further supporting integration within the Japanese context. Despite the growth in the number of IB schools, student participation in the DP and completion rates remain relatively low. Among the 42 surveyed schools, 38 provided data on their DP start year. Thirty-two schools (76%) initiated the DP within the last 10 years (2015 onwards), and 14 schools (33%) began within the past 5 years (2020 onwards), indicating that many IB schools in Japan are still relatively new. As a result, only half the schools (22) had produced at least one full cohort of graduates by 2021. These figures suggest that both schools and students remain cautious about the programme's long-term outcomes, which has contributed to a measured approach to its expansion. Focusing on teacher characteristics, Japan's public school system includes a policy of transferring teachers to different schools every few years. As a result, even teachers with no prior IB experience may be required to teach IB subjects, creating challenges in delivering IB classes effectively. This factor may also influence the implementation of the IB, including DLDP instruction. Overall, the environment surrounding IB schools in Japan's Article 1 schools is strongly shaped by the country's unique educational and cultural context. Achieving sustainable IB education in these schools requires closer alignment between national curriculum policy and teacher training systems. Moreover, empirical research should

build on these foundational findings, analyzing the characteristics and current realities of schools, teachers, and students while considering the specific institutional features of the Japanese education system.

5. Conclusion

This study identified several key characteristics of Article 1 IB schools in Japan. First, in terms of schools, the implementation of the IB curriculum in alignment with Japan's national Course of Study has broadened the diversity of educational opportunities available to students. Second, in terms of teachers, while many educators at IB-authorized schools participate in IB workshops and professional development, frequent staff rotations in public schools may hinder the maintenance of expertise and continuity in IB education. Third, in terms of students, DP learners account for only about 6% of the total student population, and many schools have fewer than ten students enrolled in the programme. This suggests that the introduction of the IB in Article 1 schools remains a relatively new initiative for teachers, students, and parents, and its educational outcomes have not yet been fully visible. Overall, the findings indicate that ensuring the sustainable development of IB education in Japan requires stable teacher placement and the establishment of a policy framework that supports the continued cultivation of graduates who have experienced high-quality, inquiry-based learning. Further empirical research is needed to deepen understanding of these institutional characteristics and their implications for Japan's educational context. [Note] This study is commissioned by MEXT (PI: Teruyuki FUJITA, University of Tsukuba). We express our sincere gratitude to all participating schools and staff for their cooperation, and to the members of our research team: Professor Takahiro Saito (Osaka University), Assistant Professor Yohei Matsumoto (Chiba University), Jaegyun Hyun (University of Tsukuba) for their contribution in the survey implementation and discussion.

The Phenomenon of Teachers' Side Jobs in Indonesia: Patterns, Motivations, and Perceived Impacts

MAEDA Mitsuko

1. Introduction

The engagement of teachers in side jobs is a widely observed phenomenon across many countries. In particular, in low- and middle-income countries, a significant proportion of teachers engage in side jobs, which has often been argued to negatively affect the quality of schooling (e.g., Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Evans et al., 2022). Indonesia is no exception; teachers frequently hold side jobs, yet the actual patterns and characteristics of such employment remain poorly documented. This study aims to shed light on the phenomenon of teachers' side jobs in Indonesia. The paper first reviews prior research on teachers' side jobs, followed by a description of the research methodology employed in the present study. The findings are then presented across four dimensions: types of side jobs, income from side jobs, motivations for engaging in side jobs, and their perceived impacts. Each dimension is discussed in relation to both previous research and the Indonesian context.

2. Literature review on teachers' side jobs

Research on teachers' side jobs has been conducted across various countries and education levels, and a body of academic knowledge has been accumulated. Among the side jobs that teachers undertake, private tutoring is particularly well-studied (e.g., Bray, 2021; Bray & Lykins, 2012; Hajar & Karakus, 2024). By contrast, other types of side jobs have attracted comparatively less scholarly attention. Maeda (2023) focused on teachers' side jobs, including but not limited to tutoring, and organized existing knowledge on secondary school teachers' moonlighting around five themes: teacher attributes, motivations, types of side jobs, problems caused by side jobs, and benefits of side jobs. In her review, Maeda highlighted that "the countries, regions, and periods when studies were conducted are diverse, and the circumstances of teachers and the actual situations of side jobs cannot be simply compared" (p. 6). Nevertheless, several key characteristics of teachers' side jobs have emerged:

- The prevalence of side jobs is not necessarily correlated with teacher salary levels. Male teachers are more likely than female teachers to hold side jobs and are often engaged in higher-paying side jobs.
- The main motivation for side jobs is economic necessity. However, side jobs may continue even when financial need is alleviated.
- Many teachers engage in education-related side jobs, but other common side jobs include agriculture, retail, and service work. Recently, online businesses have also become popular, reflecting increasing diversification of side jobs.
- Side jobs can have negative effects on teaching and teachers' private life, and in some cases, broader social consequences.
- Side jobs may also produce positive effects, benefiting teachers' own needs as well as professional and private life.

Few studies focus specifically on Indonesian teachers' side jobs, but related research shows that teachers engage in various side jobs—urban teachers in education-related work, rural teachers in agriculture. Many earn untaxed cash income, sometimes exceeding their teaching salary. Half-day schedules facilitate side jobs, while full-day schools limit them. Higher salaries may reduce side-job participation but not necessarily improve student outcomes, and side jobs contribute to teacher absenteeism. This study aims to complement these findings and provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of teachers' side jobs in Indonesia.

3. Research methodology

This study was conducted in Medan, the third-largest city in Indonesia. Eight schools (six public and two private) were selected as survey sites. A questionnaire was distributed to teachers, covering demographic attributes, types of side jobs, income, frequency, timing, and the perceived impact of side jobs on teaching. A total of 122 teachers responded. From those who indicated willingness to participate in interviews, 12 teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews. The interviews sought detailed explanations regarding their questionnaire responses. Prior to the survey and interviews, approval was obtained from school principals, and informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring adherence to ethical standards.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Types of side jobs

Prior research outside Indonesia indicates that teachers commonly engage in education-related side jobs, but also pursue various other types of employment. Similar patterns were observed among Indonesian teachers. Among the 77 teachers holding side jobs, the most frequently cited type was private tutoring (29 teachers), followed by online businesses, family-run businesses, and teaching at private schools. Their side jobs included creating social media content, producing instructional videos for contests, selling mushroom snakes, and supporting academic writing for university professors.

4.2 Income from side jobs

Although side-job income varied among teachers, it constituted a substantial part of total income. Of the 77 teachers with side jobs, two reported earning significantly more from side jobs than from their teaching salary, 23 earned somewhat more, and 15 earned roughly equivalent amounts—over half of the side-job holders in total. For instance, a teacher reported a teaching salary of 4 million rupiah but earned 7–8 million rupiah per month from side jobs. Side-job income, however, was often unstable. For example, a geography teacher worked as a taxi driver, earning about 100,000 rupiah per day, but not consistently.

4.3 Motivations for side jobs

Previous research often emphasizes economic necessity as the primary motivation for side jobs, with less attention to other factors. In this study, teachers frequently cited positive economic motivations, such as the desire to have a comfortable lifestyle, rather than urgent financial need. Many teachers also mentioned enjoyment of side jobs, the opportunity to utilize their skills and experience, and self-improvement. Only a few cited dissatisfaction with teaching or preparation for career change as motivating factors.

4.4 Impacts of side jobs

While prior research often highlights negative impacts of side jobs on teaching jobs, positive effects were prominent in this study. Most interviewed teachers performed side jobs outside school hours, believing that side jobs did not interfere with their primary teaching duties. In some cases, teachers managed side jobs during school hours, such as a meat-seller who occasionally checked phone orders. However, none perceived these activities as detrimental to classroom performance or administrative duties. Several teachers leveraged skills gained from their side jobs to enhance their teaching. For example, a teacher who is a content creator taught students IT skills, while another teacher, a violinist, applied performance experience to practical lessons.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the phenomenon of teachers' side jobs in Indonesia and their impact on teaching. Side jobs extended beyond education-related work and were highly diverse. Motivations included economic aspirations, interest or enjoyment in side jobs, application of skills and experience from teaching, and self-development. Income from side jobs often constituted a major portion of total earnings, occasionally exceeding the teaching salary, though it was sometimes unstable. Importantly, teachers recognized more positive than negative impacts from side jobs. These results align with some points

raised in previous research (Maeda, 2023), but in Medan, Indonesia, the trends were particularly pronounced. Although methodological limitations exist, such as the representativeness of participants and reliance on self-reported data, this study provides valuable insights into the complex phenomenon of teachers' side jobs in Indonesia. It contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how teachers manage their professional and private lives, and how side jobs can shape both economic and educational outcomes.
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Shadow Education in China: Cultural, Political, and Economic Conflicts Behind the Double Reduction Policy
TIAN Renxiang & Nutsa KOBAKHIDZE

Debates, disagreements, and divergences in education often stem from conflicting cultural, political, and economic ideologies that shape educational practices and policies. China's Double Reduction Policy provides a typical case of such contestations in its recent educational reform. The policy, issued in July 2021, aims to reduce students' academic burdens both inside school and the private tutoring sector, widely known as shadow education. While the initiative represents the Chinese government's determination to promote educational equity and reduce family financial pressures, it also reflects entrenched ideological conflicts over the purpose and value of education in contemporary China. However, many studies have highlighted the ongoing tension and challenges of delivering the policy (Huang et al., 2022; Li, 2023; Yue et al., 2023; Zhu, 2024). While many studies cite Confucianism (Chen & Lin, 2024; Dai, 2023; Lu et al., 2023), Socialism (Xue & Li, 2023; Yang et al., 2024) and Neoliberalism (Feng, 2021; Wang & Hamid, 2024) in China to explain the current tensions, most identify this in a simplistic manner and lack in-dept analysis, risking essentialist interpretations. We believe it is therefore helpful to examine the three forces from a historical lens as this might shed light on how these three forces have shaped China's education landscape, and why the Double Reduction policy has been so contested.

This presentation, based on our forthcoming book chapter in the book "A Modern Guide to Education in East Asia: Globalization and Local Intersections," examines how Confucianism, Socialism, and Neoliberalism interact to shape both the development of shadow education and the policy attempts to regulate it. Through a comparative and historical lens, we explore the philosophical underpinnings, contradictions, and evolving interconnections among these three forces and how they have collectively influenced the landscape and educational governance in China under the current Double Reduction policy era.

The presentation begins by introducing the current development of shadow education in mainland China and the general content of the Double Reduction Policy. By presenting an updated participation and provision modes of shadow education under the policy and recent AI development, the study demonstrates the flexibility and complexity nature of shadow education, providing insights to understand the challenges of policy governance on shadow education. The presentation will then delve into the policy content to examine what the policy aims to regulate. It summarises the policy content and take it into

analysis. This is helpful to figure out the ideology behind the policy. After setting out the context, the study turns to the focal analysis of the cultural (Confucianism), political (Socialism), and economic (Neoliberalism) forces that have historically shaped the education development in China. We ask: 1. How have Confucian, Socialist, and Neoliberal ideologies historically shaped the development of education and private tutoring in China? 2. In what ways do these ideologies conflict or converge in the formulation and implementation of the Double Reduction policy? The analysis situates the Double Reduction policy within the intersection of three ideological frameworks:

- Confucianism (Cultural dimension): Rooted in values of academic excellence, respect for learning, and social hierarchy, Confucian culture sustains parental aspirations for educational success and reinforces demand for shadow education.
- Socialism (Political dimension): The Chinese state's ideological foundation emphasizes collective welfare, equality, and state control. The Double Reduction policy is a political tool to reclaim educational space from marketization and reaffirm Socialist ideals of fairness.
- Neoliberalism (Economic dimension): The marketization of education and competition-driven ethos, intensified by China's recent years of economic reforms, have commodified learning and deepened educational inequalities.

Rather than treating these forces as isolated variables, this study conceptualizes them as historically interwoven. Their coexistence produces the ongoing conflicts: between equality and excellence, state control and market freedom, and tradition and modernization. This framework offers a historical and comparative lens to examine how ideological diversity shapes education policies not only in China but also in other East Asian contexts where similar tensions persist, such as Japan and South Korea. This research adopts a historical-comparative approach.

- Historical analysis traces the evolution of education ideologies and the recurring policy efforts to regulate private tutoring from ancient China to the present day.
- Comparative analysis draws parallels between China's policy and earlier reforms in Japan and South Korea to highlight similarities and distinctive features in addressing shadow education.

Our findings suggest that the Double Reduction policy embodies a multi-ideological struggle that cannot be explained through a single theoretical lens.

1. Socialist Objectives and Egalitarian Aspirations: The policy's emphasis on reducing educational inequality aligns with socialist ideals of balanced development and collective welfare. The state's strong intervention reflects its commitment to maintaining control over education and restoring public trust in the schooling system in socialist China.

2. Confucian Meritocracy and Parental Anxiety: At the same time, Confucian values continue to fuel an intense pursuit of academic success through examinations such as the Zhongkao and Gaokao. Parents perceive private tutoring as a moral duty to support their children's future, reflecting a long-standing belief that effort and education determine social mobility. 3. Neoliberal Competition and Market Rationality: Neoliberal thinking reframes education as an investment, equating success with measurable

outcomes and employability, and rebranding education as "positional good" (Bray, 2021, p. 28).

The commodification of education thus clashes with socialist goals of equity and collective benefit, leading to resistance from private providers and middle-class families accustomed to market choice. These three ideologies coexist in an uneasy balance, producing policy contradictions and contested narratives. They demonstrate how conflicts operate within China's educational governance under the Double Reduction policy: between cultural continuity and political control, between economic pragmatism and moral idealism. The Chinese case thus mirrors global debates in comparative education regarding the balance between state regulation, market freedom, and cultural values in education governance.

In an era when comparative education faces increasing ideological polarization, examining the cultural, political, and economic conflicts within China's Double Reduction policy offers valuable insight into how conflicting ideologies can produce disagreement within national education systems; It also presents a case where policy serves as a space for value negotiation, inviting more reflections on how comparative studies can engage with such conflict across regions.

Parental Perspectives on the Role of Private Tutoring in Shaping Social Inequalities in Hong Kong

Shrutti Satish RAJGARHIA & Nutsa KOBAKHIDZE

Education has increasingly shifted from a public good to a private commodity, with parents acting as consumers in the expanding market of private tutoring, also known in literature as "shadow education" (Bray, 2023; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2020). In Hong Kong, where competition for academic success is intense, private tutoring has become almost indispensable. Parents in Hong Kong across socio-economic strata perceive private tutoring as an important tool for improving their children's academic performance and securing future opportunities. Yet, its widespread use raises questions about whether it reinforces or mitigates existing social inequalities.

The current study explores complex parental perspectives, focusing on how private tutoring affects social inequality in Hong Kong. Specifically, it investigates whether parents perceive tutoring as exacerbating class divisions or as an instrument that enhances children's learning and upward mobility. It also examines parents' opinions on whether private tutoring should be encouraged or discouraged in Hong Kong's competitive educational landscape.

This study draws on qualitative data collected in 2021 through semi-structured interviews with 80 parents (70 mothers and 10 fathers) whose children attended local and international secondary schools. A supplementary background survey was used to collect demographic and socio-economic information such as education level, occupation, and household income to contextualize their views.

The findings reveal a wide spectrum of perspectives. Many parents highlighted that private tutoring is expensive and therefore inaccessible to lower-income families, reinforcing educational inequality by giving wealthier students a competitive edge. Others maintained that while tutoring offers certain advantages, it does not guarantee success; children's motivation, discipline, and independent learning skills were perceived as equally, if not more, important. Several parents noted that Hong Kong's highly commercialized tutoring industry offers diverse options catering to different budgets and learning needs, suggesting that parents can choose arrangements aligned with both their financial capacities and their children's abilities.

We found that parents were also divided on whether private tutoring should be encouraged or discouraged. Some believed tutoring is beneficial only for students who struggle academically, while others criticized it for contributing to student stress, fatigue, and diminished family time. These parents emphasized the need for schools and teachers to provide more individualized support, reducing the necessity for tutoring. Interestingly, many parents adopted a neutral stance, viewing tutoring as a matter of personal choice rather than a social or moral concern. In addition, parental perspectives also varied on whether Hong Kong is a fair society or not. Many parents believed even though Hong Kong is elitist and sometimes unfair, hard work and ability is rewarded with opportunities to succeed. Interestingly, some parents chose not to give definitive answers, viewing fairness as a difficult term to define and some were new to Hong Kong and thus not well-acquainted enough to comment. Contrarily, other parents highlighted that Hong Kong is not a fair society due to the existence of deep disparity between the rich and the poor; stating those with more resources and a wider social network, had access to more opportunities of growth. These findings were noteworthy because it reflected on facets of Hong Kong as a competitive educational society, where private tutoring is very prominent.

By foregrounding parents' voices, this study contributes to the broader discussion on the relationship between private tutoring and educational inequality. It highlights how socioeconomic status, cultural expectations, and parental aspirations interact in shaping decisions about supplementary education.

The findings also have practical implications for schools, educators, and policymakers, particularly in post-pandemic Hong Kong, where online and hybrid tutoring modalities have expanded access but may also deepen disparities. This study calls for continued dialogue among key stakeholders to make sure that educational opportunities remain equitable, inclusive, and supportive of all learners.

An International Comparison of the Geographical Concentration of Higher Education Institutions: A Quantitative Analysis Using the Locational Gini Coefficient

SAKAMOTO Moeka

＜Introduction＞

Modern Japan faces a range of demographic and regional challenges, among which the outflow of rural populations and the overconcentration of people in metropolitan areas are particularly pronounced. According to the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (2016), more than half of domestic migration occurs around the age of 18, when young people move to pursue higher education. Now that the enrollment rate in tertiary education has reached nearly 90 percent (MEXT 2025), this stage of life has become a critical determinant of population dynamics. Furthermore, many individuals who move from rural to urban areas for university often remain there for employment after graduation, thereby accelerating the long-term depopulation of non-metropolitan regions. Previous studies, such as those by Sasaki (2006) and Yamashita (2019), have argued that regional disparities in educational opportunities are closely associated with an imbalance—namely, an urban concentration—in the locations of universities. However, while the causes of such migration have been discussed extensively, the actual extent of disparities in university locations has rarely been quantified, nor has it been systematically compared across countries.

＜Objective of the Research＞

This study aims to quantify the geographical concentration of university campuses in Japan and to situate Japan's case within a broader international context through cross-national analysis with selected OECD member states. The Locational Gini Coefficient (Krugman 1991) is employed as a quantitative measure of spatial disparities among higher education institutions. The research tests the hypothesis that the geographical concentration of higher education institutions in Japan is more pronounced than in other advanced economies with comparable university enrollment rates.

＜Data and Methods＞

The countries chosen for comparison were the United States, Germany, and France. These countries were selected because (1) they are OECD members with advanced economies in which higher education represents a common postsecondary pathway, (2) their tertiary enrollment rates at ISCED Level 6 are approximately equivalent to Japan's (around 50 percent), and (3) unlike Japan, they do not exhibit extreme population concentration in a single metropolitan area. If Japan's population concentration were merely a function of national development, other developed countries should display similar patterns. The fact that they do not suggests that the geography of higher education itself may be a critical contributing factor. For each of the four countries, campus location data were compiled from official national databases, restricted to degree-granting institutions classified as ISCED Level 6 or higher. In Japan, the dataset was obtained from MEXT (2024) and comprised 1,333 institutions: 175 national, 158 public (prefectural or municipal), and 1,000 private universities. Comparable data were collected from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) provided

by the National Center for Education Statistics (2025) in the United States; Statistisches Bundesamt (2025) in Germany; and the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur (2017) and Conférence des Grandes Écoles (2025) in France, covering both universités and grandes écoles. The analysis consisted of two main components. First, the locations of higher education institutions were plotted on a map using Google My Maps to enable a visual comparison of their regional distributions. Second, the Locational Gini Coefficient (Krugman 1991) was computed to quantify the degree of geographical concentration within each country. This coefficient, which ranges from 0 to 1 (rounded to four decimal places), measures the inequality of spatial distribution, with higher values indicating greater concentration of campuses within a smaller number of administrative regions. This approach provided a standardized metric for cross-national comparison of spatial imbalance in higher education.

＜Results＞

In Japan, university campuses were found to be highly concentrated in major metropolitan areas, particularly Tokyo and Osaka. When classified by ownership type, the Locational Gini Coefficients were 0.361 for national universities, 0.430 for public universities, and 0.625 for private universities, yielding an overall coefficient of 0.528 across all 1,333 campuses. These results indicate that the clustering of private universities in urban regions primarily drives Japan's high level of spatial concentration, while national and public institutions are relatively more evenly distributed across regions. In the United States, the analysis covered 2,223 institutions: 746 public, 1,253 private not-for-profit, and 254 private for-profit universities. The coefficients were 0.427 for public institutions, 0.520 for private not-for-profit institutions, and 0.670 for private for-profit institutions, resulting in an overall coefficient of 0.466. Although some clustering was observed along the East Coast, the country's federal structure contributes to a comparatively balanced national distribution relative to Japan. In Germany, the dataset included 663 institutions, categorized as 403 state universities (öffentlich-rechtlich), 219 private institutions (privat), and 41 church-affiliated universities (kirchlich). The coefficients were 0.446 for state universities, 0.525 for private institutions, and 0.389 for church-affiliated ones, with a total coefficient of 0.455. While some concentration was observed in populous states such as North Rhine–Westphalia, Germany's federal structure maintains a moderate degree of spatial equity. In France, the dataset comprised 1,639 degree-granting institutions, including 1,404 universities and 235 grandes écoles. Private universities were excluded due to their limited degree-awarding authority. When classified by ownership type, the coefficients were 0.346 for national institutions, 0.582 for public grandes écoles, and 0.645 for private grandes écoles, yielding an overall coefficient of 0.355. Notably, the coefficients for universities and grandes écoles were 0.341 and 0.493, respectively, indicating that despite the concentration of elite institutions in Paris, France's higher education system remains relatively decentralized at the national level. When compared across countries, Japan exhibited the highest overall Locational Gini Coefficient at 0.528, followed by the United States at 0.466, Germany at 0.455, and France at 0.355. When these figures were examined alongside each country's urban population ratio (World Bank, 2025), Japan also displayed the highest level of urbanization, with 92.1 percent of its population living in urban areas. In contrast, the United States, Germany, and France showed lower urban

population ratios—83.5, 77.9, and 82.0 percent, respectively—corresponding to lower levels of university concentration. This cross-national pattern supports the hypothesis that Japan's university system is exceptionally centralized in comparison with its OECD counterparts.

＜Conclusion＞

This study quantitatively examined the geographical concentration of higher education institutions in Japan and compared it with that in the United States, Germany, and France, using the Locational Gini Coefficient as a standardized measure. The analysis demonstrated that Japan exhibits the highest degree of spatial concentration among the four countries, primarily driven by the pronounced urban clustering of private universities.

Theories and Methodologies in Comparative and International Education: An Arts-Based Hermeneutic Investigation

TU Derrick

The purpose of this philosophical investigation is to examine the diversification of theories and methodologies in comparative and international education (CIE) and tensions between positivistic scientific inquiry and research for transformation, emancipation, and decolonization. More specifically, what is the significance of the multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches that exist in CIE today, and what can scholars learn from contradictions between positivistic and critical approaches? I answer these questions through an arts-based hermeneutic inquiry with a music composition (Bradley & Perry, 2025; Chen, 2007; Li, 2001; Peters, 2017) that sets the field of CIE in relation to other academic disciplines and as a combination of academic perspectives and interests from various actors in local, national, and international contexts.

The thesis of this presentation is that despite shifts in purposes, theories, and methodologies approaches in the field, CIE continues to be defined by notions of comparison going back to Marc-Antoine Jullien while also attempting to address issues related to ahistorical discussions about colonialism and scientism (Arnove, 2013; Bereday, 1964; Carnoy, 2025; Manzon, 2011; Tikly & Bond, 2013). Tensions and contradictions in the field are the result of trying to reconcile differences between subjectivity and objectivity constructed in an oppositional relationship. I suggest that comparativists should consider differing viewpoints as complementary parts that lead to a broader understanding of education on multiple levels (Chen, 2007; Li, 2001); it is through the combination of diverse perspectives that will lead to more complex and nuanced analyses of global educational practices in the twenty-first century by not only challenging taken-for-granted assumptions in comparative education research and practices, but also transcending the duality between subjectivity and objectivity through self-awareness and awareness of society (Chen, 2007; Li, 2001). However, scholars need to be aware that merely obtaining self-awareness will not necessarily address issues the field of CIE; considerations for graduate education, academic faculty careers after graduation, and research practices also need to be discussed and implemented (Anderson et al., 2020).

Research in CIE has developed comparative and international education starting in the mid-nineteenth century has developed over the years with a focus on scientific research, policy-borrowing, and the promotion of international and global education to examine the relationship between school systems and societies (Altbach, 1991; Arnove, 2013; Bereday, 1964). In the twentieth century, CIE broadened their approaches from positivistic inquiry to a focus on national and international education expansion and alternative forms of education with an interest in transformation, emancipation, and decolonization (Manzon, 2011; Tikly & Bond, 2013; Torres, 2013). The diversification of CIE where multiple schools of thought seem to co-exist (Altbach, 1991; Bray et al., 2007; Bray & Thomas, 1995; Jules, 2021) also resulted in advances in qualitative and mixed methods research methodologies (Anderson, et al., 2020; Baily et al., 2016; Call-Cummings et al., 2020; DeJaeghere, 2024; Thomas & Schweisfurth, 2025). The broadening of the scope of ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances occurred against the backdrop of various global events such as the two World Wars, the Cold War, independence of post-colonial nation states in Africa, Asia, and Oceania, and economic collapses with the rise of neoliberalism and top-down globalization (Arnove, 2013; Manion, 2020; Tikly, 2025; Torres, 2013). Despite increased interconnectedness between countries in the 21st century, there is also a fragmentation of knowledge from hyper-specialization in post-secondary studies, an over-saturation of information from technological advances, and suspicion over grand narratives. As a result, scholars have called for anti-hegemonic globalization and the use of transformative and emancipatory approaches for decolonization as a means to implement agendas for progressive education policy and social movements in education to challenge top-down globalization and instrumental rationality of economic markets and consumption (Torres, 2013).

Scholars have responded to Torres' (2013) recommendations by examining the current state of CIE through epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues in the field, emphasizing the importance of decolonization, voice and representation, power, and feminist intersectionality to challenge Eurocentrism (Anderson et al., 2020; Call-Cummings et al., 2020; Shah, 2025). There is motivation in the field of CIE to amplify marginalized voices, move from talk to action while considering our own ontologies and epistemologies as CIE researchers, and consider topics the research approaches of what has already been published in the literature. Additionally, CIE scholars realize that there is a need to think about the hidden curriculum in graduate courses, integrate studies in methodology, provide more opportunities for fieldwork, be able to sit with discomfort when working with other CIE scholars with other research orientations or philosophies, and open publishing venues for innovation and different ways to share research when using decolonizing research methods (Anderson et al., 2020). The theoretical and methodological developments in CIE seem to maintain the successes of CIE scholars from previous generations who were interested in "social democratic" change (Torres, 2013, p. 470) but there is also criticism about how ideas about transformative, emancipatory, and decolonial frameworks are separated from their historical origins (Carnoy, 2025) or how globalization may be beneficial but unequal (Chen, 2007, p. 8). As an arts-based hermeneutic investigation with a music composition (Bradley & Perry, 2025; Chen, 2007; Li, 2001; Peters, 2017), this presentation addresses debates and issues in CIE mentioned above, and is suitable for conference attendees with any level of music knowledge or background.

A productive disagreement? Secular and religious paradigms intersecting in education for sustainable development

Mariya IURCHENKO

Abstract

With the emergence of UNESCO's program "Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD), where cultivating a "sustainable mindset" is considered as one of the top priorities, the question of moral education on environmental issues becomes essential to the future of our planet and humanity. Currently, there is an emerging need for transformative environmental ethics in ESD. It seems that the question on what determines our moral compass on the topic of environmental sustainability is not only reopened, but also gains new perspectives from the social sciences and in comparative education. However this is also where the conflicts start arising. This paper will analyse the current discourses on environmental sustainability from the dominant secular paradigm and the often eclipsed yet increasingly visible religious paradigm.

The goal of the paper is to highlight the need for re-introducing religion and spirituality to the educational field and the benefits that come with that, such as realistic and relevant moral education, but also decolonisation of the academia and knowledge in general. As several researches point out, what becomes essential in ESD is not only the spread of the factual knowledge on the climate issues, but also the development of a sustainable mindset. With modern humanity being likely to adopt a more individualistic and subsequently consumerist behaviour, it is essential to re-think the fundamental moral values about the human's place in this world and our stewardship towards the nature. Nevertheless this becomes complicated when even the foundation for ESD turns out to be counter-productive. For example, Komatsu et al. (2020) showcase that the classic student-centred learning approach (SCL) is already initially rooted in the ontological individualism, mostly represented within the countries with liberal market economies which are being further "detrimental to social and environmental sustainability". This has been later reflected in the "radical proposal" of Rappleye et al. (2024), where the authors point out that the SDG 4 and the ideas perpetuated within the educational field are more ideology-rooted than factually based. They prioritise the methods within the modern educational paradigm which are essentially Western-centric and further contributing to the environmental challenges.

The authors indicate how the widespread Cartesian "human-nature split" eliminates animism from the current educational paradigm, despite animistic traditions still being largely present within the societies and having a great potential in developing "ecologically mindful dispositions". Similarly, Silova (2021) highlights the role of the comparative education in perpetuating the Anthropocene, the idea of nature being solely a resource for the economic growth and the "scientific" approach, which is mostly rooted in "Western Enlightenment notions of 'progress' and 'development', while displacing alternatives". Here, the author points out that despite years of modern progress, we are still diving deeper into the problems such as poverty, inequalities and a poor environmental state of the planet. However, in order to initiate radical change, one should reimagine the place of the humans in the world and their interdependence with

the nature - which for instance could be made possible through "non-Western" cosmologies and spiritual traditions.

This ties further to Hayhoe's (2021) emphasis on the narrowness of the dominant modern Western-derived theories, which inevitably lead to secularisation and the further re-establishment of the modern colonialism within the comparative education field. In essence, education is said to be losing its original self-developmental value and instead becoming a product of global economical competition, especially neglecting arts and moral education. Moreover, Hayhoe also points towards Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations" - a potential future conflict due to the clash of civilisations and religion, especially if taken into the consideration how any of the non-Western traditions are being downplayed/ignored in the modern educational paradigm. Similar to Hayhoe, Manzon & Lee (2023) also indicate that religion is perennially relevant and has in fact influenced the very founding of education per se. Moreover, religious teachings ignite our openness to the transcendent realm and relation to the other beings beyond human's subjectivity's understanding and control which could be vital for dealing with the modern moral degeneration caused by the culture of individualism and materialism as well as the lack of responsibility for own actions and own surroundings.

Recent research shows that the majority of the population remains religious (e.g., Hackett et al. 2025 via Pew Research Center). Religion, known to be able to influence human emotions (e.g. Sharma & Jha 2017, Woodhead 2018), is deeply embedded in our cultural settings (e.g. Edara 2017, Chukwudebelu 2024) and so has been able to exert power on other significant institutions within the society such as political regimes or educational systems. Moreover, sources from multiple countries suggest that it was religious institutions and missionaries who made education widely accessible to the masses to begin with (e.g. Raftery 2013). Though not being the main actor within the educational domain anymore, it is fair to assume that in multiple societies religion is still playing an active role in the daily life of an average person - and subsequently may potentially possess the critical role in influencing our views on nature, sustainability and our formation of the Anthropocene.

Being actively present within the local/indigenous cultures and traditions while also maintaining mainstream relevance within several nations' constitutional conventions (e.g. maintaining a certain dress code and/or overall professional standards, official holiday status granted to religious holidays, religious texts being an essential at the state official events etc.), different religious streams continue emitting their presence. Nevertheless, as pointed out previously, it seems that for the longest time this cultural domain has not been on the radar of the majority of researchers and relevant institutions. Moreover, the growing secularism, especially across the dominant West, has been pushing away the discussions about religion and its position within the society. Backed by the modern politicisation of religion and the rise of more radicalised streams such as Christian nationalism, the image of religious values (even if they are not Christian) seem to have been downplayed among the important stakeholders within the environmental sustainability field as well as the academic researchers in general. Numerous initiatives actively yet subtly avoid using the terms "religion" or "spirituality" when talking about local cultures, moral values and ethics, especially when the subject is environmental

sustainability education (e.g. UNESCO's materials on ESD have no mention of religion or religious communities, but actively mention cooperation with the local stakeholders).

However, in the most recent years the body of research on the benefits of religion for the human psyche and the development of a sustainable mindset keeps on growing. Several studies analysing various religious contexts almost unanimously conclude that these positively influence a person's relationship with nature and views on their place in the world (e.g. Sharma & Jha 2017; Luetz et al. 2018; Das et al. 2025). Gathering these perspectives from different religious backgrounds leaves us questioning - why have we ignored the place of religion in the discussion on sustainability for a significant amount of time? Is the conflict between the secular and the non-secular paradigms justified? And can this discourse come to a practical conclusion, especially if it means creating functional educational initiatives and models for promoting an environmentally sustainable mindset?

This paper aims to explore these questions in greater detail and offer an extended overview of the scholarly discourse about the involvement of the religious/spiritual involvement within the modern educational paradigm and opportunities that have been ignored due to largely Western-centric secular approach to ESD. Conducted in a form of a literature review, this paper analyses the following issues:

1) How does the discourse on sustainability and the cultivation of a sustainable mindset among people vary across the secular and non-secular paradigms? What are the reasons for this conflict among the paradigms?
In this section I will be providing a historical chronological overview of the articles and relevant historical events. These relate to the development of specific dominant ideas across the academia and showcase how invisible political and cultural biases have the power to influence it. In this part I will be exploring the becoming of the mainstream secular image of the academia and how it has been shifting towards a more open discussion on the possible benefits of religion for the environmental sustainability and specifically ESD. Additionally this section will provide a substantial overview of the research on the place of religion within the environmental sustainability. Here, my goal is to showcase the rising idea of religion's potential benefits for the development of the personal moral compass without an immediate promotion of specific religious doctrines.

2) Is there a possibility that the secular scholarship is mostly Western-centric and can an open dialogue between the secular and non-secular paradigms lead to academic decolonialism?
Looking closer into the articles that were written from a critical standpoint towards religion and its place within the conversation on sustainability/environmental education, it becomes visible that most criticism is directed towards Christianity/Catholicism. However, this showcases a rather reductionist perspective on religion in general, indirectly associating it only with Christianity. By ignoring non-Christian traditions, we are likely to not only overlook views and practices from other cultures that still have an active influence upon the human behaviour in regard to the environment, but are also contributing to the further domination of the western-centric secular views and ideas across the globe. Putting more research interest into the exploration of how environment

and the human stewardship towards nature is portrayed across various religious and indigenous traditions can open up an intercultural academic discussion on environmental ethics and the related moral education, as well as contribute to the deconstruction of predominantly Western ideas in this research area. By comparing and cooperating within the two paradigms (secular and non-secular), scholars could potentially work on effective study materials/research/etc. that would on one hand draw inspiration from the religious texts, and on the other hand make it inclusive and neutral enough so that students/scholars from various backgrounds could interact with them.

3) Environmental sustainability and ESD as an intersection point for the scholarly discourse.
Environmental sustainability is one of the most relevant research topics across the globe. United not only by the academic grounds, but also through international initiatives such as the UN SDGs, researchers might greatly profit from an expanding intercultural discussion. United by the same goals of improving the environmental situation and creating flexible yet effective educational resources and research, it is more likely to not only bring the researchers together to work on the SDGs, ESD or other relevant educational initiatives, but also reinforce intercultural communication and produce highly insightful comparative works. By offering each other otherwise unconventional views on something familiar and collaborating across different cultural and religious backgrounds, the scholars are likely to encounter new viewpoints and produce valuable comparative works on the functionality and further possibilities of engaging religion into the environmental sustainability and related moral education discussion. Here it is important to highlight, that the goal of religious involvement is not to spread a certain doctrine, but to analyse and engage the shared ideas of human stewardship towards nature. Moreover, this would further correspond with the interests of the students about different religious views and their application to the real world issues (e.g. Cukras-Stelągowska et al. 2025).

The final goal of this paper is to point out the benefits in the intercultural engagement on the religious exploration of the human stewardship towards nature by focusing on the highly relevant topic of promoting sustainability, unbiased and open work within the comparative paradigm as well as joint efforts on creating an effective moral education within the ESD initiative. Moreover, the paper should further highlight the chances of combining secular and non-secular research on the topic of environmental sustainability and the cultivation of sustainable mindset through educational initiatives.

Floods, Vulnerability, and Human Capital Formation: Causal Evidence on the Educational Impacts of Climate Shocks in Lao PDR
KOIKE Takumi

Climate change is increasingly recognized as one of the most critical challenges facing developing countries, exerting profound effects not only on livelihoods and infrastructure but also on the accumulation of human capital. Among the many manifestations of climate change, floods are particularly destructive in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where adaptive capacities and institutional preparedness remain limited. Recent global evidence shows that floods disrupt schooling, health, and long-term learning

outcomes through complex pathways involving household income shocks, infrastructure damage, and health deterioration. Yet, despite the growing frequency and severity of climate-related disasters, causal evidence on how floods affect educational outcomes in LMIC contexts—especially in Southeast Asia—remains remarkably scarce.

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) provides a compelling context to examine these issues. The country is highly exposed to hydrometeorological hazards due to its monsoonal climate, mountainous terrain, and extensive dependence on the Mekong River system. Over the past two decades, floods have recurred almost annually, damaging agricultural lands, housing, roads, and public infrastructure. In 2018, for example, flash floods triggered by heavy rainfall and a dam collapse in Attapeu Province caused severe devastation—affecting more than 700,000 people, destroying hundreds of schools, and displacing entire communities. As Lao PDR continues to pursue rapid economic growth and hydropower development, its vulnerability to water-related disasters is expected to intensify under climate change. At the same time, the education sector faces persistent challenges of low completion rates, language barriers among ethnic minority students, and disparities in school infrastructure. These conditions make Lao PDR a setting to investigate how environmental shocks interact with pre-existing socioeconomic and institutional vulnerabilities to influence educational attainment.

While recent studies such as Huang and Dong (2025) in China have employed quasi-experimental methods to identify the long-term effects of flood exposure on educational outcomes, similar evidence is nearly absent for LMICs in Southeast Asia. Much of the current knowledge about the educational consequences of floods comes from descriptive case studies or small-scale surveys following extreme events. Few attempts have been made to quantify the causal impact of early-life flood exposure on children's schooling or to disentangle the mechanisms through which floods affect human capital accumulation. Moreover, even within Lao PDR, studies have concentrated on health, nutrition, and infrastructure recovery, with little attention to the education dimension. This research therefore, seeks to fill this crucial gap by providing the first nationwide causal analysis of flood exposure and educational outcomes in Lao PDR, while systematically unpacking the heterogeneous effects across geographic, socioeconomic, and ethnolinguistic dimensions.

This study addresses two interrelated research questions: RQ1: What is the causal impact of flood exposure on children's educational outcomes in Lao PDR? RQ2: How do these effects vary by household vulnerability, geography, and demographic characteristics? To identify the causal effects of flood exposure, this study adopts a cohort-based difference-in-differences design inspired by Duflo (2001) and Huang and Dong (2025). The identification strategy exploits both spatial and temporal variations in flood occurrence across districts and provinces over the past 15 years, combined with the birth cohorts of school-aged children. Specifically, the model estimates how exposure to major floods between the ages of 0 and 15 influences later schooling outcomes, controlling for district fixed effects, province-by-year shocks, and district-specific time trends. The design effectively compares educational outcomes between cohorts that experienced floods during formative schooling years and those that did not, within the same geographic units. To further strengthen identification, the analysis includes an

event-study specification that traces dynamic treatment effects by age at exposure, and placebo tests using pre-flood cohorts to ensure robustness against confounding temporal shocks. Flood exposure data is derived from multiple geospatial and hydrological sources, including the Dartmouth Flood Observatory (DFO), MODIS satellite-based inundation maps with 250-meter resolution, and the Mekong River Commission (MRC) hydrological records that provide annual flood-peak intensity and duration. These datasets will be combined to construct district-level indicators of flood frequency, severity, and affected area over time. Educational outcomes are sourced from Round 6 of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Lao PDR (2017), which provides nationally representative data on school attendance, grade attainment, and literacy among children aged 5–17. To trace potential mechanisms, the analysis incorporates indicators of child health, household sanitation access, and school infrastructure resilience. For heterogeneity analysis, the study interacts flood exposure with indicators of household wealth quintiles, ethnic and linguistic background, road and bridge accessibility derived from OpenStreetMap, and distance to hydropower dams or levees, which may mitigate or amplify exposure risk. The dataset also includes village-level night-light intensity from VIIRS imagery as a proxy for local economic activity and post-disaster recovery capacity. Together, these multi-source data allow a comprehensive assessment of both the direct and indirect pathways through which floods affect human capital formation.

This research expects to make three main contributions. First, it provides the first causal estimate of flood impacts on education in Lao PDR, filling a crucial regional and thematic gap in the climate-education literature. By applying a cohort-based difference-in-differences framework to nationally representative microdata, the study generates credible evidence on the magnitude and persistence of disaster-induced learning losses in an LMIC setting. Second, it unpacks the mechanisms through which floods affect human capital accumulation. Preliminary evidence from health and WASH studies in Lao PDR suggests that post-flood diarrheal outbreaks and undernutrition significantly increase school absenteeism among young children. Combined with disruptions to road and school infrastructure and household income shocks, these findings highlight how environmental shocks cascade through multiple channels—health, access, and household economics—to shape long-term educational trajectories. Third, the study reveals heterogeneous vulnerabilities that can inform more equitable adaptation strategies. It is expected that flood impacts are most severe among (i) children living in low-elevation floodplains near the Mekong and its tributaries, (ii) households in the lowest wealth quintiles or dependent on subsistence agriculture, and (iii) ethnic minority students facing language barriers and limited access to information during emergencies. Conversely, communities with flood-resilient school infrastructure, improved sanitation, and functioning early-warning systems are anticipated to exhibit greater resilience. Policy implications extend beyond Lao PDR. The results offer insights into how climate adaptation and disaster-risk-reduction (DRR) policies can integrate education planning—by promoting climate-resilient school design and ensuring inclusive communication for linguistically diverse populations. The findings also contribute to the evidence base for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 13 on climate action) by demonstrating how environmental resilience and human capital formation are intertwined in the LMIC context.

Mediating Debates in Comparative Education: What Can we Learn from Social Cartography and Interreligious Dialogue?

Maria MANZON & Kotaro HIRAKITA-JOHRDEN

Introduction

Debates in comparative education have been present throughout its history. Paradigm wars were visible in the 1960s especially in the English-speaking scholarly communities. These transitioned to a more pluralistic co-existence of diverse paradigms. More recently, a resurgence of polarizing debates have become salient in its specialist journals. Yet, in a world that is increasingly becoming fragmented and polarized, how can comparative education scholarship contribute to peace rather than create conflict? How can its scholarly debates be reconciled or at least recalibrated into productive dissonance?

This paper proposes two approaches – social cartography and interreligious dialogue – as potential references for mediating debates in comparative education. Through social cartography, the analytical horizon of epistemic debates is visually broadened. Meanwhile, through interreligious dialogue, the spirit of mutual learning and respect are deeply inculcated. The authors review pertinent literature and employ theoretical argumentation to tease out the contributions and implications of social cartography and interreligious dialogue approaches for scholarly discourse in comparative education.

The paper is structured in four parts. First, it gives a brief overview of recent scholarly debates in comparative education. Second, the method of social cartography and its potential mediating role in these discourse conflicts are elucidated. Third, the interreligious dialogue approach and how it can be a reference for scholarly communication in comparative education is explored. The final section recapitulates the implications of these approaches not only for us professionally, but also for us as human persons who can contribute to peaceful and responsible co-existence in this common home. Debates in Comparative Education Contestations and diversity have accompanied and contributed to the development of comparative education. Paradigm wars and methods wars were notable in the 1960s especially in the English-speaking scholarly communities. These transitioned to a more pluralistic co-existence of diverse paradigms and methodologies. Rather than adopting dualist, dichotomous propositions, there was a noticeable shift towards viewing positions as de-centred and located along a continuum allowing for different degrees of interaction between polarities. However, in the last decade, an epistemic battle gaining attention in our field centers around debates about its decolonization, reflecting not only the vitality but also the construction of comparative education as a contested field of power between intellectual traditions (Manzon, 2011). The debate has rather deeper roots, yet it has been fueled more recently by a back-and-forth between two groups of comparativists with opposing viewpoints on the history of the field.

To illustrate these two rather internal heterogeneous groups, they can – at the cost of complexity reduction – be represented as follows: On the one hand, there is the decolonial group (e.g., Edwards Jr., 2025; Gong et al., 2023; Rappleye, 2025; Shields & Paulson, 2024; Silova et al., 2017; Stein et al., 2020; Takayama et al., 2017; Takayama, 2018; 2021; 2024) that critiques, for instance, the field's historical embeddedness in

colonial (Christian-)Western modernism, racism, and white (male) supremacy, which taints the paradigm and structure of broad parts of contemporary discourses, including world culture and world system theory. Further, their academic program includes investigating the marginalized "onto-epistemic, religio-spiritual, or cosmological dimension" (Edwards Jr., 2025:1) and points towards alternative, indigenous, and non-Western ways of knowing and being 'in the pluriverse' (Gong et al., 2023) to decolonize comparative education scholarship. On the other hand, there is a group that refutes wide parts of the decolonial criticism (e.g., Bamberger & Morris, 2025; Bu, 2020; Carnoy, 2025; Epstein, 2021; 2023; 2025; Vickers, 2020; Vickers & Chen, 2024; Vickers & Epstein, 2024; Vickers & Morris, 2022), with some criticizing it for an ahistoric, woke, intolerant orthodoxy and ideology, which ignores non-Western colonialism and is based on esoteric language, selective criticality, cultural essentialism, and binary West-Rest thinking. For instance, Shields and Paulson (2025) are criticized by Epstein (2025) for their "historical ignorance" (p. 20) and as examples of a "leftist turn" (p. 17) based on "bias and dogmatism" (p. 22), reflecting the "growing tendency of comparativists to engage in political activism in place of purist scholarship" (Epstein, 2023: 7).

While some actively seek a more 'interdependent mode of academic engagement' (Takayama, 2025) instead of simply refuting the opposition, the reconciliation of the polarization seems not yet foreseeable. In this regard, this paper takes on the questions posed by this conference: what norms and values should guide disagreement in comparative education? How do we teach or model disagreement in academic spaces? How can we foster tolerance for diverse research paradigms and tools? (CESHK 2026 website).

The following sections examine two approaches as references for productive learning engagement between conflicting discourses. The first is social cartography, and the second is interreligious dialogue.

Social Cartography: Mediating between Narratives

The method of social cartography is a heuristic technique widely employed in the social sciences, particularly within comparative education (Silova & Auld, 2020; Suša & Andreotti, 2019). This tool not only helps to make visible realities that have been marginalized or excluded from dominant narratives, but also assists to bring to the fore what can be considered a 'cold topic' about which little has been said (Cowen, 2023). It also operates as a means of contestation, unsettling the linear accounts embedded in the official histories of hegemonic societies (Tikly, 2024). From this perspective, our contribution proposes a cartographic approach that could be "complicated and uncomfortable" (Silova & Auld, 2020, p. 27), capable of interrogating ontologies of the oppressed subject and generating spaces of epistemic resistance. Such an approach broadens the analytical horizon and positions the cartographer, in this case we the researchers, as a mediator between narratives, cognitive maps, and ideological representations (de Sousa Santos, 2018). In this sense, social cartography contributes to the deconstruction of debates in comparative education and enables the imagination of alternative possibilities and reconciliatory dialogues among them. These, in turn, offer ways to visualize theoretical and methodological narratives about comparative education. This imaginative dimension becomes crucial in response to the growing polarization of

scholarly discourses in the field and as a way to advance through productive conflict. The social maps used in social cartography could foster a deeper understanding of how epistemic identities are constructed and how spatiality and subjectivity are interconnected across intellectual communities, offering an alternative lens through which to interpret knowledge (Kirby, 1996; Lingard, 2021). At the same time, these maps must remain open to continuous transformation (remapping), facilitating the expansion of epistemological boundaries and the hybridization of discourses (King, 1999; Masschelein & Simons, 2020). Within this process, the role of the academic comparativist is central: we must interpret both the cognitive maps of theoretical traditions and the political and pedagogical discourses that accompany them. In this regard, Nóvoa (2018) identifies three key gestures of critical research which help in this actual process: estrangement (creating critical distance), intercession (epistemic mediation), and communication (dialogic engagement). These gestures allow researchers to problematize dominant metanarratives and create dialogic spaces between competing epistemologies (Tikly & Bond, 2013). Thus, it is acknowledged that every map is also an act of power—a political representation that shapes how educational ideas are understood and compared (Ricker y Jan Kraak, 2023).

Accordingly, this study consciously seeks to explore the potential intersections between imaginaries of positional debates in the field, in order to emphasize "the agentic properties of maps" (Suša & Andreotti, 2019, p. 1). Sharing these interpretations through social cartography entails a reflexive and ethical exercise that recontextualizes epistemic debates through a critical and plural reading of and a potential paradigmatic understanding among them. Ultimately, the analysis highlights "the capacity of maps to draw our attention to the relational aspect of these knowledge communities" (p. 3). In this vein, we turn to how the interreligious dialogue approach seeks to bridge differences and build on commonalities for mutual learning and shared goals for a better world.

Interreligious Dialogue: Mediating across Worldviews

Religion is one of the 'cold topics' in comparative education on which there have been long silences (Cowen, 2023). In human history, religion has been a source of conflict as well as of learning and conflict resolution, through interreligious dialogue. In this paper, we look at the interreligious dialogue approach as a 'mirror' for self-examination, a 'window' for alternative views, and a 'microscope' for deeper analysis of principles and features of interfaith dialogue to build bridges for mutual learning. Interreligious dialogue is "an intentional encounter between individuals who adhere to differing religious beliefs and practices in an effort to foster respect and cooperation among these groups through organized dialogue" (Agrawal & Barratt, 2014: 571-572). This intentional 'dialogue' is characterized by a "meaningful encounter, a respectful person-centered exchange of ideas to learn about the other's religion and religious experience" (Longhurst, 2020:118).

Advancing a theory of dialogical interfaith/interreligious learning in adult education, Pope et al. (2021:3) conceptualized it as a "rational and extra-rational learning experience in which an individual listens to understand the religious other often with the outcomes of intersubjectvity, deep relationships, and transformed perspectives". Abu-Nimer identified three components of interfaith dialogue that leads to perspective transformation: 1) a cognitive element of knowing other religious views; 2) a psychological element of a

"positive emotional experience in meeting the other through the construction of a safe and trusting relationship"; and 3) a collaborative element of working together on a task (2002, cited in Pope & Nicolaides, 2021: 117). Interreligious dialogue thus offers a context through which persons of different faiths "can learn from and with each other" (Pope et al., 2021: 1) [emphasis added]. Reviewing the philosophical discourse on dialogue and relating it to interreligious dialogue, Elias (2010) identified these benefits: strengthening one's identity and clarifying one's beliefs, attitudes and values; becoming enriched by others' perspectives; and enhancing one's capacity to listen with patience and tolerance. In addition, interreligious dialogue fosters respect for diverse beliefs and looking for common religious experiences. "They ask for openness to difference and the predominance of ethics over dogmatism … (and) presupposes the willingness to rethink one's own ideas in the light of those of others, thereby opening the door to mutual enrichment and transformation" (Vila, Freixa & Aneas, 2020: 256-257). Other communicative virtues include: the inclination to admit one's fallibility, the capacity to reformulate one's concerns to make them understandable to others (Burbules & Rice, 1999).

Despite the benefits of dialogue with difference, its outcomes – also in the interreligious context – are not always assured and can be diverse as on the spectrum proposed by Burbules and Rice (1991:409, cited in Elias 2010:71):
(a) agreement and consensus, identifying beliefs or values all parties can agree to;
(b) not agreement, but a common understanding in which the parties do not agree, but establish common meanings in which to discuss their differences;
(c) not a common understanding, but an understanding of differences in which the parties do not entirely bridge their differences, but through analogies of experiences or other indirect translations can understand, at least in part, each other's positions;
(d) little understanding, but a respect across differences, in which the parties do not fully understand one another, but by each seeing that the other has a thoughtful, conscientious position, they can come to appreciate and respect even positions they disagree with; and
(e) irreconcilable and incommensurable differences (Burbules & Rice, 1991: 409).

Likewise, a variety of outcomes may result from the scholarly debates in comparative education. The applications and implications of the above conceptual frameworks from interreligious dialogue will be discussed in the paper.

Conclusion

Diversity and difference are enriching as the natural world exhibits. Every unique being co-exists and develops in a plurality of forms within an ecology of being. This paper contributes a hopeful vision for the ecology of our comparative education scholarly community to grow in respectful learning with and from diverse Others through the methods of social cartography and interreligious dialogue.

Freedom of Conscience and the Ethics of Coexistence: Hong Kong in East & Southeast Asian Perspective

Alexander FEDOROV

Freedom of conscience, though less discussed than freedom of religion, is foundational in education—especially when plurality, belief, and governance sit uneasily in balance. Both these freedoms mark the seam between difference and exclusion: neglect hardens disagreement; attention turns it into civic learning. Whereas freedom of religion is protected in international law both individually and in community with others and is often pursued through institutional or group claims, freedom of conscience centres on individual moral autonomy (Scolnicov, 2010)—the right to believe, not believe, or change belief (Trigg, 2010; Maclure & Taylor, 2011). Schools are where these tensions surface—through curriculum, governance, classroom routines, and student expression in peer groups and assemblies. Ritual practices can, in effect, favour particular worldviews in policy and everyday life. In this sense, freedom of conscience is not only a legal or philosophical principle but a practical condition: at the systemic level, it sustains peace and cohesion; at the cultural level, it shapes knowledge and identity; and at the personal level, it nurtures integrity, ethical reasoning, and openness to plural—including non-religious—worldviews.

Hong Kong is a rare regional outlier: a secular constitutional framework sits alongside an extensive network of denominational schools (Christian, Buddhist, Taoist, Islamic) within a religiously pluralistic landscape. The religiously affiliated sponsoring bodies run a large share of publicly funded schools under state regulation, a pattern contrasting with neighbouring systems that centralise provision or privilege a single tradition. This configuration is shaped by layered history—British colonial governance and post-1997 Hong Kong's status as a Special Administrative Region within the People's Republic of China, whose national regime has been described as "one of the most regulated religious markets in the world" (Wang & Froese, 2020, p. 108). Against that backdrop, the Basic Law (Articles 32, 137, 141, 148) establishes comparatively robust protections for religious expression and for the autonomy of sponsoring bodies in education. This articulation—rooted in the infrastructural role of religious organisations in schooling and social services and postcolonial settlement—is also comparatively rare globally.

Regionally, education policy in China—and, in varying forms, across East and South-east Asia—often frames citizenship around duties and social harmony rather than individual rights, a tension at the heart of the "Asian values" debate (Bell & Ham, 2003; Cummings, 1996). In schools, this orientation prioritises cohesion and role-based obligations, leaving questions of conscience and individual moral agency—so prominent in European discussions of religious education (e.g. R. Jackson, 2004, 2014)-less explicitly articulated in policy and under-theorised in the philosophy of education. Consequently, the language of freedom of conscience—e.g. "conscience-based exemption," "respectful attendance without participation," and "opt-in/opt-out on grounds of conscience"—seldom guides curriculum design and appears only sporadically in teaching materials, leaving students with few opportunities to engage with it. Against this backdrop, Hong Kong is notable: the religious plurality (in schools and, even more, in society) coexists with constitutional secularity and a broadly secular public sphere. Yet freedom of conscience remains

comparatively under-articulated in research, policy, and practice—the gap this paper seeks to address. Given Hong Kong's socioeducational milieu and the distinctive role of religious organisations, disagreement over religion's place in schooling has long marked policy discourse and academic debates (Tse, 2016; L. Jackson, 2015).

Yet these debates are seldom framed in terms of freedom of conscience or the learner's purposes in studying religion, particularly in Hong Kong's secular–denominational settlement, where collective rights are explicit and individual conscience is thinly named. Instead, tensions recur on three fronts: (1) between denominational sponsors and secular regulatory oversight; (2) between colonial legacies and post-handover governance in twenty-first-century religious education; and (3) in classrooms where the line between respect and endorsement blurs—across ritual participation, assemblies, citizenship/values instruction, and the purposes of learning about religions. Such disagreements are typically managed pragmatically—by compromise, administrative discretion, and informal tolerance—and further shaped by the perceived value of denominational school networks as prestigious providers within Hong Kong's hyper-competitive, examination-driven ethos and long-standing capacity constraints, rather than by explicitly naming individual rights or learners' purposes.

In this light, the development of ERS, first introduced in the mid-2000s, reads as a careful settlement: it secures exposure to multiple traditions and cultivates respectful dialogue, yet leaves freedom of conscience largely implicit. The guide, progressive in comparative terms yet unevenly implemented, is saturated with civil language—respect, tolerance, appreciation, and open-mindedness—across aims, objectives, outcomes, and pedagogy, whereas explicit autonomy verbs—such as choose, refuse, and opt out—are rarer. Structurally, revisions over nearly two decades have been modest, and classroom implementation remains limited (author, 2025). The guide's wording reflects this emphasis: "provide the maximum opportunity and freedom for students to express their ideas and responses" (CDC, 2024, p. 59); "adopt a positive attitude … and respect for their beliefs" (p. 79). While autonomy is named, its operationalisation remains contingent on school-level implementation—especially in a system where provision is school-based and denominationally sponsored (e.g. Tse, 2020). Taken together, this discourse and the broader socio-political milieu invite a question: does ERS advance freedom of conscience, stabilise a colonial-era denominational arrangement, or attenuate religious education by foregrounding civility language over substantive provision—particularly outside the Christian sector in Hong Kong? Either way, ERS offers a structure within which freedom of conscience can be developed in practice; the Curriculum and Assessment Guide warrants sustained philosophical analysis of its language, its implied conception of the learner, and the ethics of disagreement it presupposes.

Methodologically, the study uses qualitative document analysis paired with a comparative review. For Hong Kong, the Ethics and Religious Studies (ERS) curriculum and assessment guides (2007, 2014, 2019, 2024) and the relevant Basic Law articles that frame denominational governance (Articles 32, 137, 141, 148) serve as primary sources. These sources show how collective rights and individual freedoms are configured across curricular and institutional levels. The comparative strand draws on analogous constitutional frameworks for religion and education and, where available, on specific

curriculum documents, supplemented by secondary literature and policy analyses from Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Thailand, to illustrate how different state–religion arrangements constrain or enable freedom of conscience. This dual approach maps where freedom of conscience is articulated, sidelined, or contested across Asian education systems, and how its relationship with freedom of religion is operationalised in law, governance, and curriculum.

Comparative lens.

The regional cases are purposively selected to mirror, contrast, or partially overlap with Hong Kong's framework, showing how state–religion relations shape the scope of freedom of conscience in schooling. In multireligious Singapore, the state upholds a secular yet tightly regulated model that curbs overt religious expression in schools and coordinates the management of pluralism; dialogical education—structured around preliminary, practical, and critical engagement—has been proposed to sustain harmony (Tan, 2010). Malaysia, by contrast, constitutionally privileges Islam while accommodating sizeable non-Muslim minorities, producing governance in which collective religious identities strongly shape school rules. South Korea is formally secular, yet many Protestant-affiliated schools retain cultural influence, reflecting entanglements between Christianity, nationalism, Confucian values, and modernisation (Park, 2012), with variable space for opt-out/opt-in norms. Thailand embeds Buddhism into national identity; regional and religious diversity—especially in the Muslim-majority south—poses persistent challenges to cohesion (Liow, 2009; Sopapol & Setiawan, forthcoming), with implications for participation and exemption practices. Taken together, these contrasts show how plurality, policy, and secularity intersect, offering comparative insight into the under-articulated role of individual conscience in education—and clarifying Hong Kong's distinctive mix of plural provision and constitutional secularity. This pragmatic silence signals persistent, under-theorised misalignments. It suggests that an explicit focus on freedom of conscience can provide a philosophically coherent direction for religious education—one that is portable across contexts by asking what happens when dense religious infrastructures meet a practical social milieu and an examination-driven school culture. In a global metropolis like Hong Kong, the value of religious education extends beyond the personal or local; framed through conscience, it can prepare students for global citizenship and for life in societies where religion more visibly organises public life (e.g. the UK and parts of Europe), while modelling the peaceful—if competitive—coexistence of traditions that many Western polities now seek. Philosophically, a conscience-centred approach pairs a Confucian–liberal emphasis on inner sincerity over enforced ritual conformity and a Buddhist ethic of non-harm and compassion with the Basic Law's rule-of-law protections, equipping students to navigate the contested global public sphere—culture wars, transnational conflicts, and emerging forms of moral disagreement—and offering a distinctive, transferable model for study and practice.

Contributions.

Theoretically, the paper foregrounds freedom of conscience—an under-articulated concept in education research—distinct from freedom of religion. By situating conscience at the intersection of plurality, policy, and secularity, it reframes the theorisation of individual autonomy in educational settings, especially in contexts shaped by postcolonial legacies and contested state–religion arrangements. Practically, it argues for

safeguarding individual conscience alongside collective rights and sets out policy implications for managing diversity and sustaining coexistence. The comparative cases map the range of state strategies and warn against privileging collective freedoms at the expense of individual rights. Framing conscience as both a legal principle and a lived classroom reality, the paper advances debates on postcolonial secularity. It offers insights for sustaining plurality in Asia's diverse—if not divided—contexts.

Navigating Red Lines: Political Risk Management and National Education in Hong Kong's Universities

LIN Cong Jason

In today's world, with the rise of increasingly authoritarian policies and practices, higher education institutions (HEIs) across many societies are grappling with the challenge of maintaining an outlook of academic freedom and liberalism while satisfying the political red lines of their host societies. Examples include recent debates over diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in American universities. In states such as Florida and Texas, legislation has been introduced to restrict or eliminate programmes related to critical race theory and diversity training on university campuses. These moves have prompted concern among faculty and students that academic freedom is being compromised to align educational practices with prevailing political ideologies. Outside the United States, similar pressures can be observed. In Hungary, the forced relocation of Central European University from Budapest, due to regulatory changes widely perceived as hostile to academic independence, illustrates how political red lines can directly challenge the core values of higher education (HE). In China, the situation is even more pronounced, with strict government oversight of curricula, research topics, and faculty appointments to ensure that universities uphold the ideological line of the Communist Party. These interventions highlight the difficult balancing act that HEIs must perform—negotiating the space between fostering open, critical inquiry and accommodating the political constraints placed upon them by national governments. Across these diverse contexts, the challenge for HEIs remains similar: how to preserve their mission as spaces of free thought and innovation while navigating the often restrictive and rapidly evolving political landscapes of their host societies.

Hong Kong provides a particularly valuable case for studying political risk management in HE, due to its unique and rapid transition from a relatively liberal academic environment to one characterised by significant political restraint. In the span of just a few years, Hong Kong's universities have shifted from operating as globally connected, liberal enclaves under Chinese sovereignty to institutions subject to increasingly direct state intervention and political red lines. This rapid transformation, occurring alongside institutional aspirations to maintain global competitiveness and an international outlook, makes Hong Kong an especially instructive site for examining how HE systems manage political risk in the face of authoritarian encroachment.

This article contributes to this line of research by offering a Hong Kong perspective. In Hong Kong, national education is a relatively new phenomenon, entangled with identity politics, China-Hong Kong tensions, and Sino–US relations. Before the implementation of the National Security Law in 2020, given the relatively high degree of academic

freedom in Hong Kong, national elements were commonly discussed critically in HE. After 2020, due to pressure from the Chinese government, national education has become a matter of national security and a political requirement that HEIs must shoulder in order to contribute to national development. Crucially, HEIs occupy an intermediary position between state power and civil society. As large, complex organisations with multiple and sometimes competing goals, HEIs must respond to the imperatives of high politics, such as state policies and national directives, while simultaneously engaging with diverse stakeholders from civil society, including faculty, students, and non-state organisations. This 'in-between' position makes universities uniquely valuable sites for observing how state policies, like national education, are not simply imposed from above but are also interpreted, negotiated, and sometimes resisted or adapted at the institutional level.

By focusing on how Hong Kong's universities mediate and implement national education policy, this article provides new insights into the evolving state–society relationship in contexts of tightening political control. Accordingly, HEIs in Hong Kong face a tension between maintaining academic freedom and independence to preserve their global reputation, while satisfying the government's political mission of promoting national education. Unfortunately, the extent to which major HEIs in Hong Kong are dealing with this tension remains largely unknown. A few studies have examined shifts in the political environment over time, documenting how current conditions have created 'governmentality with Chinese characteristics' within universities and pushed them to integrate into national initiatives. These studies have established an important foundation. Yet, given that national education is a relatively new phenomenon, a more comprehensive and updated perspective is needed to better understand government requirements and expectations for HE regarding national education, how different HEIs have responded strategically, and what their responses imply for state–HE relations and for the future of HE in Hong Kong under increasingly authoritarian control. Using thematic analysis as the primary method to examine relevant government and university documents, this study aims to answer two research questions: (1) under the increasingly authoritarian political climate in Hong Kong, how do public HEIs address the tension between maintaining academic freedom and liberalism while fulfilling the political mission of promoting national education; and (2) to what extent are the universities' approaches to this tension a result of political risk management (i.e., strategically responding to the contradictory expectations of state power, the local academic community, and the international community) in HE in post-National Security Law Hong Kong?

This article first introduces political risk management as the theoretical framework and elaborates on the complex relationship between the state, HE, and national education in Hong Kong. It then explains how thematic analysis was applied to collect and examine the data. After presenting findings on how major HEIs deal with this tension, it discusses what these approaches mean for state–HE relations and the future of HE in Hong Kong under increasingly authoritarian control. Overall, the analysis reveals that universities have become highly adept at reading, identifying, and prioritising the political risks attached to non-compliance and controversy. State authorities now frame national education as a core political duty, buttressed by a dense web of mandates, oversight mechanisms, financial incentives, and legal threats. The eight UGC-funded universities—key actors bound to government funding and public legitimacy—have adopted risk

management strategies that privilege institutional survival. These include heightened self-censorship, overt acts of allegiance, and careful management of messaging and campus life, such as the removal of dissenting symbols and distancing from potentially non-conforming associations.

Nevertheless, as the findings illustrate, universities' responses are not simply acts of top-down compliance or passive dependence. Rather, they are calculated forms of risk mitigation and adaptation, wherein superficial yet rational implementation serves to meet government benchmarks and stave off deeper intervention, while minimising pedagogical disruption and safeguarding institutional reputation. Here, what may appear as merely symbolic or superficial acts should be understood as rational, path-dependent strategies through which universities navigate the tension between new political imperatives and their established organisational identities and stakeholder expectations. Recognising these deeper institutional logics provides a more nuanced account of university agency under political constraint. The response to the second research question is thus apparent: the strategies adopted by Hong Kong's HEIs are, above all, products of political risk management. Universities are actively—and often cautiously—assessing the trade-offs of each course of action, seeking to harmonise national imperatives with local values and global reputational pressures. Rather than a simple binary of resistance or obedience, this dynamic reveals ongoing negotiation, selective adaptation, and at times covert efforts to preserve fundamental academic norms. The outcome is a shifting landscape, in which the boundaries of permissible inquiry, teaching, and institutional advocacy are constantly redrawn—not only by government edict, but also by universities' own calculation of acceptable risk and optimal compliance.

Shaping 'Good Citizen' in Tanzania: The Role of Diverse Values in Civic Education Textbooks

Moyo Osiah MWAIHOLA & YIN Xiaolin

The notion of "good citizen" has long been contested, as it is influenced by historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts, as well as by various competing ideological values, agendas, and frameworks at local, national, and global levels. Textbooks, as vital teaching tools, play a key role in spreading and reinforcing the values necessary for shaping the kind of citizen that the state desires to develop. Cultivating a "good citizen" has been a core focus of civic education in Tanzania for many years. Despite its enduring controversy, there has been little research examining how these diverse values actually influence and define the idea of a "good citizen" within the Tanzanian context. This paper, using a qualitative approach, particularly content and critical discourse analysis, examines Tanzanian secondary school civics textbooks to uncover the kind of good citizen conveyed and the values that undergird such notions. The findings will have important implications for civic education and diverse values that inform the preferred notions of a good citizen.

Introduction

The notion of a 'good citizen' originates from ancient Greek city-states and is articulated in the works of eminent philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, where it was linked to the idea of a happy individual and the happiest city, grounded in the fundamental civic

virtue of commitment to the common good (Collins, 2022). In contemporary discourse, the concept of 'good citizen' has gained global currency yet remains a complex and widely debated notion (Evans, 2006; Haste, 2010; Marri et al., 2014; Torney-Purta et al., 1999) characterised by its normative and value-laden nature (Alviar-Martin, 2018; Bolzendahl & Coffé, 2013; Sears & Hughes, 1996; Waldschmidt & Sépulchre, 2019; Villalobos et al., 2021), with its meaning deeply embedded in and influenced by the sociocultural norms and values of the society in which it is applied. Whereas "good citizen" in Euro-American countries and other global north societies is traditionally associated with liberal values (Chiou, 2025; Mouritsen, Per with Astrid Jaeger, 2018; Raiker, at al., 2020; Wall, 2020), in most Global South countries, "good citizen" is shaped by the historical-political-cultural context, such as colonial legacy, national interests, local values (e.g., Ubuntu in Africa), as well as contemporary globalised ideals (e.g., neoliberalism) (Arnot, et al., 2018; Hunter, 2016). For instance, in the People's Republic of China, "good citizen" is shaped by Confucius philosophy, socialist communist ideals, nationalism under the Chinese Communist Party's hegemony, and (neo)liberal market economic principles (Li, 2021; Kennedy & Li, 2015). In Tanzania, "good citizen" has been integral to education since colonial times, persisting through the post-independence era. It remains a central agenda both in the informal settings and official education policy discourses and school curricula. This concept is continually reshaped to reflect specific socio-political, ideological, and cultural values and priorities at local, national, and global levels (Hunter, 2013, 2015; Mgalula, 2025; Ohlig, 2025). However, tensions persist about the definition of "good citizen" and the underlying values that inform its interpretation. Textbooks are considered a significant resource of official curricular knowledge that often serves the ideological purposes, needs, and interests of the dominant group within society (Apple, 2014). The ideological values underpinning textbook content fundamentally influence the type of citizenship education students receive and the kind of "good citizens" they are expected to become. Meanwhile, these values also significantly shape teachers' approaches to citizenship education. In Tanzania, school curricula and textbooks used in all public and private schools (excluding international schools) are designed and developed by the government. During the process of developing the curriculum and textbooks, different stakeholders, such as religious institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), parents, and 'development' partners, especially aid and donor agencies like the World Bank, UNESCO, and the IMF, who often advocate for different or even conflicting citizenship ideals, are involved. The diversity of perspectives and interests raises tensions when determining which ideals and attributes of "good citizen" should be incorporated into the textbooks. This study aims to (i) examine the concept of a 'good citizen' described in Tanzanian secondary school textbooks, and (ii) explore different values that inform and shape the notions of good citizenship found in the examined textbooks. In so doing, the study can help to further unpack the purposes and interests for which the provided citizenship education is designed to serve.

Methodology

1. Research paradigm, design, and methodology

This study is rooted in the interpretive paradigm – it views the meanings, including textual, as socially constructed and deeply shaped by the contexts within which it is written. It employs a qualitative approach, particularly content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, to investigate what notion of a good citizen is conveyed in Tanzanian

secondary school Civics textbooks, and identify what values undergird the conceived notions of "good citizen". This study will involve a two-stage process. Firstly, we adopt content analysis to filter out utterances from textbooks that indicate "what type of citizen should students become". Then, the selected data will be categorised to obtain the different dimensions (e.g., moral citizen, national citizen, global citizen) of a "good citizen", which is defined by the textbooks. Secondly, based on the above classification, we will adopt a critical discourse analysis approach to examine the content within each dimension, exploring which values dominate the definition of a "good citizen" across different dimensions. This study will use Nvivo 14 for data analysis.

2. Dataset

Tanzania has a centralised education system. Textbooks, like other official policy and curricular documents, and related materials, are centrally prescribed. The Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), through curriculum developers, is the central government organ responsible for curriculum design, reform, and development in the country, including the development and publication of textbooks. That being the case, textbooks in Tanzania provide a critical area for studying and understanding the official, state-preferred citizenship ideals and narratives directed at young Tanzanians enrolled in public and private schools (except international schools). Good citizen notions in Tanzania can be taught through different subjects such as Kiswahili, History, and Geography, however, the principal subject for imparting state-sponsored notions of good citizen has been Uraia (at primary level) and Civics (at lower secondary level) (Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), 2019). Recently, a new curriculum has been formed (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2023), with the name of the subject changing from 'Civics' to 'Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili' (see, Wizara ya Elimu Sayansi na Teknolojia, 2023), which translates as 'Tanzania History and Moral Education', the new subject, which will now be taught in Swahili, other than previously English-taught Civics. However, despite the new curriculum and syllabus for the newly approved subject being in place, its implementation has not yet commenced, as new textbooks have yet to be produced.

The study focuses on secondary school Civics textbooks, which are in use at lower secondary school level during the time of conducting and writing this study. They are i) Civics for Secondary Schools: Student's Book – Form One, ii) Civics for Secondary Schools: Student's Book – Form 2 iii) Civics for Secondary Schools: Student's Book – Form Three, and iv) Civics for Secondary Schools: Student's Book – Form Four, which will herein be coded as B1, B2, B3, and B4, respectively. These textbooks are written as per the 2005 Civics for Secondary schools' curriculum/syllabus (URT, 2005), which was based on the 1995 Tanzania Education and Training Policy (ETP) – a liberal informed education policy. However, it must be noted that the textbooks have been published during the year 2021-2022, which is post-new policy era, the 2014 Tanzania Education and Training Policy – a neoliberal-informed policy. In this case, we argue that even though, the textbooks are explicitly indicating that they are written as per the 2005 curriculum (a liberal), they are likely to be equally shaped by the new policy (the 2024 ETP, neoliberal) as they were published eight years after the policy was formed. Secondary school textbooks are selected, first for the fact that they are meant to be accessed by young people, which constitutes the largest portion of the Tanzanian population, and are at the age of

developing active participation in politics and are expected to become good citizens after graduation; secondly, lower secondary school textbooks are selected because they are most comprehensively written, compared with the primary and senior secondary level, detailing state preferred official narratives of national identity, citizenship, and the good citizen. In fact, Civics subject is compulsory for all secondary school students, and is examinable in the National Final Year Examination, which accounts for students' final grades to qualify them for entry into further education at the advanced (senior) secondary education level or colleges. This makes understanding what notions of a good citizen conveyed in these textbooks at this level even more critical.

A critical review of what a good citizen is in the Hong Kong New Era: Can patriotic Chinese have Western values?

SU Qi Bang & ZHANG Cheng Yao

The political and social environment in Hong Kong has changed significantly in recent years. With the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law in 2020 (Hong Kong Police, 2025) and the Article 23 legislation in the Basic Law in 2024 (Hong Kong SARG, 2024), China has further strengthened its control over this special city on a legal basis. Therefore, Hong Kong is expected to develop its economy and citizens' livelihood in the New Era of " from stability to prosperity" that focuses on harmony but not conflicts (Hong Kong SARG, 2022). Some previous debate (Vickers, E., & Morris, P., 2022; Yan& Morris, 2024) on whether the decrease in freedom of expressing anti-government views in Hong Kong is breaking the human rights promised by the fundamental law may no longer have practical significance now, as the trend of stronger China's control and interpretation on the politics and law environment of the city is hard to change (Baehr, P. 2022).

In the New Era analysed above, this review explores the features of a good Hong Kong citizen. Firstly, he or she must be a patriotic Chinese. The citizenship education in Hong Kong has developed to have many more Chinese features than before. At the secondary school level, the old subject 'Liberal Studies' that includes teaching students to think critically about the government has been replaced by the new 'Citizenship and Social Development' subject which more emphasis on national security and building students' patriotism and Chinese identity (Yan, K. C. A., & Morris, P. 2024; Lin, 2025a; Lin, 2025b). Moreover, in higher education, National Security Education have also been a compulsory course in Hong Kong (Shek et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). In East Asia, value and national education are often considered significant parts of citizenship education (Wong et al., 2021), and citizenship education supports the individual nation's values (Lee & Kennedy, 2024). Therefore, increasing the Chinese national and patriotic education in Hong Kong's new era is rational. Nevertheless, there may be some research gaps on whether the new generation of Hong Kong citizens can be educated to keep some Western values. Western values refer to good citizenship values popular in the global North economies, such as liberal democracy and respecting individual human rights (Tupper & Cappello, 2012).

In the current research, the features of good citizens could be separated into two types: conventional and social movement-related (Villalobos et al., 2021). Kennedy and others

(2008) pointed out that the first ones focused on the relatively thin and basic responsibilities, such as obeying the laws, paying taxes, and having a strong national identity. In contrast, the social movement-related ones may be thicker and rights-oriented (Reichert, 2016), such as being active in community volunteering, participating in protests, fighting for human rights, protecting the environment, and advocating for the interests of females and immigrants. I aim to argue that the good citizen of Hong Kong should be socialised with both the conventional ones and the social movement-related features of a good citizen. In the context of the Hong Kong New Era, the necessity of obeying Chinese laws and having a Chinese identity has been discussed in the second paragraph, which are the typical features of a conventional good citizen. At the same time, it may also be rational to explore how to educate young people with some Western social movement-related good citizen features due to economic reasons and the students' interests. From the economic perspective, good citizens, good government, and good national security all need money. Nevertheless, Hong Kong's fiscal deficit in recent years has not been optimistic (Hong Kong SARG, 2025). To play the role of 'Super Connector' and 'Super Value-Adder' between the Chinese mainland and the broader world with the sustainable flow of a large amount of comprehensive business resources (Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, 2024; Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, 2025), cooperating and competition with foreigners with various values is needed.

To conduct intercultural communication smoothly, the ability to understand others' views with multiple perspectives is needed (Arensmeier, 2015). Therefore, learning some Western values, including some relatively sensitive ones, such as respecting liberal freedom and individual rights, as well as some general ones, like protecting the environment, is helpful for the new Hong Kong citizens to communicate with foreigners with diverse cultural and value backgrounds. Moreover, from the perspective of students' learning interest, some citizenship education with Western values that care for individual rights could also be added. Students need to feel that learning civics education contributes to their own personal interests and security, not just to the interests and security of the nation and society. Otherwise, according to social exchange theory (Heath, 1976), such social exchange may not be sustainable, especially since the Citizenship and Social Development subject currently only categorises students as meeting or failing the required standards in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2025). Students may prefer to use the time and energy to study other subjects or address other issues. As the formal teaching time offered by the formal civic education subject is limited, some informal citizenship education that is supported by external resources can be strengthened. For instance, in the field of law education that is closely linked with citizenship education (Hoge, 2002), Hong Kong can refer to the practices of some states in America that invite some lawyers from the Bar Association to come to the school to share how to use the law to protect personal interests.

To summarise, I met the research gap about the features of a good citizen in the Hong Kong New Era in this review. I argue that the answer is patriotic Chinese with some Western values. Firstly, I will clarify some concepts and provide background on the New Era. After that, I analysed that the National Education, as a feature of a good citizen, should have been strengthened in recent years. Following is some critical discussion on

why some Western values are in the social movement-related good citizenship framework, which can be suitable for the young Hong Kong citizen from the perspectives of economic development and learning interest. Some examples from the Global North are given as potential references. It is worth noting that good citizenship research needs both top-down and bottom-up perspectives (Simonsen, 2022). Therefore, more empirical research with newly collected data from students and teachers is needed to conduct further research on educating young people into good Hong Kong citizens as internationally competitive, patriotic Chinese.

From Assimilation to Multiculturalism: Educational and Social Policy Contrasts in Bhutanese Migration to Australia

SATO Minako

1.Purpose and Research Questions

Bhutan is a multi-ethnic country in South Asia, with a population of 780,000. In 2008, Bhutan transitioned from a monarchy to a constitutional democracy. The western region uses Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan, while the eastern region uses Sharchhopkha and the southern region uses Nepali as their respective regional lingua francas. The school system follows a bilingual policy in English and Dzongkha, making these two languages the official languages of Bhutan. In Bhutan, the outflow of the younger generation overseas has rapidly increased following the COVID-19 pandemic. This presentation aims to clarify how macro-level state policies influence micro-level individual and family language consciousness and language practices, taking as a starting point survey results showing that minority languages, which had been at risk of decline under the monolithic development support for the national language (Dzongkha) and assimilative integrationism, are now being revived as home languages in Australia. Furthermore, it examines how meso-level structures, such as local immigrant communities, public schools, and immigrant coordinators, mediate between these levels. The research questions are as follows:

• RQ1: Why have extremely small Bhutanese minority languages, which are not subject to multilingual services or heritage language education, been revived despite multicultural policies?
• RQ2: How does the "family-unit" characteristic of Bhutanese migration in the 2020s affect the migration process and the revival of minority languages as home languages?
• RQ3: Including the case of Bhutan, how do reported cases worldwide of minority ethnic languages being revived in destination countries indicate the limitations of homeland language policies, and what implications do they have for multicultural policies globally?

2. Research Background

A major feature of migration after 2020 is that 78.9% of migrants come from the eastern and southern regions of Bhutan, meaning they are speakers of minority languages rather than the national language, Dzongkha. According to the Australia Census 2021, the majority of migrants 40nrolment as couples or family units, especially families with school-age children (ages 6–15). It was also reported that English and "other languages" are used as home languages. To clarify what "other languages" are, a home-language survey was conducted from 2022 to 2024 targeting Bhutanese families living in Australia

(Sato, 2021). These results were compared with a previous survey conducted in Bhutan from 2015 to 2017, which had shown that under the spread of Dzongkha, minority languages in parents' households declined as home languages, with a tendency for households to select a bilingual environment of English and Dzongkha.

3. Prior Cases and Studies

Cases have been reported worldwide in which minority ethnic languages that had been declining in the homeland are revived as home languages in destination countries: Armenian in France and the United States (Boyajian, 1994), Hebrew among Jews after the founding of Israel (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999), and the revival of Latin American indigenous languages such as Nahuatl and Quechua in the United States and Canada (Hinton, 2008). In Australia, cases have also been reported of Hong Kong immigrants maintaining Cantonese as a home language (Fan, 2016) and Korean immigrant families maintaining Korean (Gao, 2018). Shigematsu (1995) points out that migration studies in multilingual countries are limited when viewed solely from the nation-state perspective.

4. Survey and Findings

The study selected families with school-age children from minority-language-speaking households from the first questionnaire survey (N = 306). This was followed by a second-stage interview survey (40 households), and then a third-stage qualitative survey (5 households) using language biography interviews combined with the Rashomon approach. The research methodology involved language biography interviews to trace family migration and language trajectories. The language biography focuses on how Bhutanese migrant families, originally from rural minority-language areas, changed their social networks and language practices as they first moved domestically to urban centers and subsequently migrated overseas to Australia. It captures these transformations over time, revealing shifts in linguistic and social connections across multiple migration stages. In contrast, the Rashomon approach—based on the narrative technique of Akira Kurosawa's film Rashomon—collects multiple perspectives of the same event through interviews with different family members.

In this study, it was used to analyze how fathers, mothers, and children each experienced migration differently and how their diverse experiences were brought into family life, collectively transforming home-language practices. The language biography approach revealed that, accompanying the geographic relocation from Bhutan to Australia, home-language environments shifted from Dzongkha-English bilingualism to minority-language-English bilingualism. Typically, families from rural areas with minority languages first move domestically to urban Dzongkha-speaking areas such as Thimphu, and then migrate to Australia. Upon arrival, they initially settle in major cities, such as Perth and Sydney, and after an average of about six months, they move to regional cities, such as Adelaide and Hobart In Tasmania. This multi-stage migration is a characteristic pattern. Using the Rashomon approach, narratives were collected from fathers, mothers, and children, showing that children's exposure to Australian multicultural education led to awareness of heritage language maintenance, which was brought into the household. Parent networks centered on schools acted as a driving force to implement this awareness in practice. The influence process characteristic of the "family" unit was observable.

5. Discussion
A feature of Australian immigrant policies is that, based on macro-level legal and institutional frameworks, concrete practical programs are implemented through local primary schools, incorporating multiple layers: (i) programs for immigrant children, (ii) support for immigrant parents, (iii) intercultural education for non-immigrant children and the local community, and (iv) guidance for school teachers. The survey highlighted that coordinators familiar with immigrant programs exerted significant influence in multiple households. Such meso-level entities and functions serve as a driving force, converting immigrants' language consciousness into practical home-language choices. At the same time, the family-unit characteristic of Bhutanese migration had a significant impact. In particular, the presence of school-age children brought Australian multicultural policies implemented through educational institutions into the home.

6. Conclusion
Macro-level clarity of multicultural policy and its legal basis generate "awareness" among minority immigrants. The operational force is the presence of meso-level practical programs and coordinators who mediate to transform this awareness into action. The results of this study may provide implications for multicultural policy planning globally, including in Japan. For the Bhutanese government, selective support for Dzongkha constitutes "benign neglect" toward approximately twenty other minority languages (Hornberger, 2012) and implies "indirect exclusion." Policymakers should seriously consider the significance of young couples leaving the country with their children.

Measuring reform in global diffusion research – A focus on China
Marcelo MARQUES

Arguably, reform or policy change is a multidimensional construct that, at least theoretically, builds on the assumption that governments have several tools available to induce change. They may do so by means of (i) legislative changes (new laws, amendments, and decrees), (ii) budgetary incentives granted to institutions to instate reforms, (iii) informational campaigns to generate awareness, enforce or sustain change, or (iv) contractual arrangements between state- and non-actors that are tied to state-defined mandates. In addition to these well-documented four traditional "tools of government" (Hood, 1983), a fifth one spread globally during the first years of the new millennium (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007; Le Galès, 2016): performance evaluation or standards-based regulation. In a short sequence, a series of new change mechanisms and policy instruments were tried that used standards-based regulation as their foundation.

Examples in the education sector include accreditation and accountability policies, whereby states, or state-accredited associations, establish standards and benchmarks to hold providers of public services and goods accountable for the quality of their performance. At first sight, it may appear that each of these five tools of government can be operationalized straightforwardly: legislative changes, budget allocations, or the rise of public-private partnerships, among others, can be examined over time to pinpoint policy trends. At closer examination, however, unidimensional measures fall short of understanding policy mixes and interrelated policies ("reform packages") that are rolled

out over several years (Capano & Howlett, 2020; Migone & Howlett, 2024). It also falls short of differentiating between "big" and "small" changes, as well as short-lived and long-lived changes. The examination of reform trends in one country thus requires a long-term, retrospective analysis if policy mixes are taken into consideration.

Studies that examine "traveling reforms," that is, specific reforms that diffuse globally, are exponentially more challenging to operationalize. For example, Lee & Strang (2006), in their well-known sequential analysis of public service downsizing, record changes in the size of the administrative apparatus, compare these changes over time and across countries, look for sequential patterns, and determine factors that induced these changes. Other scholars, such as Morais de Sá e Silva & Porto de Oliveira (2023) turn their attention to international organizations (Ios) such as, the World Bank, OECD, Inter-American Development Bank, etc., and examine the diffusion of these Ios' particular "global scripts" (e.g., conditional cash transfer, participatory budgeting, school autonomy with accountability reform, etc.) diffused across countries over time. They use program information from the Ios to reconstruct the timeline and prevalence of global policies or scripts, funded and/or promoted by Ios. Although at least five "tools of government" and many more tools enlisted by Ios and non-state actors are used to induce policy change or reform, diffusion research tends to narrow the spectrum of policy to a single tool of government or a single policy tool: legislative changes.

In the education sector, in particular, operationalizing reform in terms of legislative changes is the most prominent one for investigating global diffusion processes and outcomes (see, for example, Bromley at al. 2023). Such a narrow, one-dimensional focus leads to all kinds of misrepresentation and misinterpretation. However, there are several caveats about using legislative changes as an indication of policy change or reform. Some of these limitations, discussed in the presentation, are the following:

First, it atomizes changes into singular legislative changes, even though reforms typically consist of a "package" of policies, or a policy mix, rolled out over several years.

Second, the "lazy s-curve" of global diffusion (Watts, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2025) visualizes the slow growth, exponential growth, and burnout of diffusion processes, and at the same time helps to identify early adopters or late adopters of a global reform or script. However, it disregards the "stickiness" (Colyvas & Jonsson, 2011) and the lifespan (Morais de Sá e Silva & Porto-Oliveira, 2023) of policy change. Possibly, a legislative change was adopted in one year, but then dropped or eliminated the following year.

Third, the pragmatic approach to measuring reforms narrowly in terms of legislative changes records the year of "adoption" (e.g., when a law was passed, or a program was implemented). Compared across countries, a "global reform bubble" or a reform peak emerges if countries introduce the same reform (e.g., the global school autonomy with accountability reform, participatory budgeting, conditional cash transfer, etc.) within a short sequence from each other, thereby suggesting periods of punctuation (reform bubble) and erroneously periods of reform inertia, in the years that follow legislative changes. Possibly, legislative changes were then pursued with other, less-binding legislative instruments (guidelines, etc.), not recorded in laws and amendments to laws.

Fourth, the arena of policy change may vary depending on the policy domain. For example, there were worldwide decentralization reforms in the last two decades of the 20th century, suggesting that the government unities in charge of schools are the subnational units or communities. As a result, analyzing only national-level data on school reform would indicate that little has happened since the 2000s.

Fifth and finally, national policy styles are entirely ignored. For example, there is a democratization of expertise in education, and public opinion on school reforms looms large. Therefore, reforms in the education systems are, in comparison with highly specialized policy domains such as, for example, aviation policy, politicized from the onset.

As a result, legislative changes that require political consensus are the last resort and are only tried if required by law (e.g., for large budget items that surpass a certain threshold of public spending). One would therefore expect that controversial policies, such as pro-immigration policies, are not introduced through legislative changes but rather through other tools of government. Additional rarely discussed instruments for inducing policy change also exist: pilot projects that generate "buy-in" from important stakeholders (in education, for example, teacher unions or associations) are in some countries part and parcel of the policy design. The latter is prominent in direct democracies, such as in Switzerland (Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2024).

The presentation begins with a brief explanation of the importance of the research question, which focuses on how to measure reform in comparative policy studies by analyzing the global spread of specific reforms. It then proceeds to an empirical analysis of documented legislative changes, or "reforms," in the education sector of China, as the first case study of this research project. The database includes legislative changes gathered from publicly available laws and policy repositories. Reform events are identified, classified, and tracked over time and across different jurisdictional levels—such as both national and subnational levels when possible.

These events are summarized using indicators of intensity (the amount of change), direction (the main direction of change), and durability (how long measures remain in force). These indicators help us understand system dynamics, identify episodes where multiple measures occur together as bundled reforms, and distinguish between clusters and isolated acts. The analysis produces comparable timelines and profiles of reform activity, highlights differences in durability among various types of instruments, and shows shifts in the mix of softer versus harder measures. This provides a clear and interpretable foundation for future cross-system comparisons.

"What (and when) does "College-Ready" mean": Institutional Disagreement in High-Impact Practice Models Across Secondary and Postsecondary Contexts

Sam LUBY

This presentation examines how institutional disagreement over the definition and implementation of Student Learning Opportunities (SLOs) and High-Impact Practices

(HIPs) contributes to conflicting models of college readiness between high schools and universities. Drawing on comparative data from CommonApp precollege experiences and NSSE college engagement surveys, the study explores how SLOs and HIPs are framed, valued, and operationalized differently across educational sectors. The presentation argues that these disagreements reflect deeper tensions in educational values, accountability structures, and positionality—particularly regarding who bears responsibility for preparing students for postsecondary success.

The transition from secondary to postsecondary education represents a critical juncture in students' academic trajectories and eventual future earnings (Kuh et al., 2006). Yet despite decades of reform efforts and attempts to collect more relevant data and understandings on measuring and improving postsecondary student success, persistent disparities in college readiness and success across populations continue to challenge educators, policymakers, and institutions (Reber, Kalkat, & Goodman, 2025; Kurlaender, Reed, & Hurtt, 2019). A central tension in this discourse concerns the distribution of responsibility: should the burden of preparing students for college success fall primarily on the "sending" institutions, i.e. high schools, their communities, and families, or on the "receiving" institutions, i.e. universities and the communities they reside in? While this question has long animated debates and subsequent practiced models in education policy, it remains unresolved in practice (McCormick & Johnson, 2013). Therefore, both sending and receiving institutions continue to deploy public and private funds to create programming meant to uplift college-ready academic support, interpersonal and socioemotional development, and student learning opportunity initiatives (Reber, 2024; Benson, 2021). Similar to the debate of preventive verse prescriptive medical approaches to successful healthcare outcomes, educators have so far failed to empirically confirm which approach leads to better postsecondary student success outcomes (Lina, Mastrokoukou, Longobardi, & Bozzato, 2024).

Rather than attempting to resolve this broad institutional question and enormous policy and practice conundrum, the present study contributes to the conversation by examining a specific and actionable dimension: the role of student learning opportunities (SLOs). Mounting evidence has shown that beyond academics, student learning opportunities have significant associations with postsecondary success outcomes (Ng, Wolf-Wendel, and Lombardi, 2014; Fletcher & Tan, 2022; Lane, Morgan, and Lopez, 2020). These structured experiences, such as service learning, sports & the arts, professional working experiences, specialized academic coursework & research, internships, and independent & collaborative projects, are widely implemented in both high school and college settings and are often associated with improved academic engagement and persistence (Edwards 2010; Kuh, 2008; Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011). However, little is known about the high school verse university comparative impact of these student learning opportunities on college success outcomes. Therefore, this study examines whether Student Learning Opportunities (SLOs) are more impactful on college success outcomes when implemented during high school, preparing students to enter college academically, socioemotionally, and professionally ready, or after they have already matriculated to college.

Using institutionally linked data from the Common Application (CommonApp), which captures precollege activities reported during the college admissions process, and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which documents college-level engagement and outcomes, this study aims to provide empirical evidence about what SLOs are most impactful on postsecondary student success outcomes, who they have the most impact on, and when they are ideally experienced. Evidence from the analysis will contribute to both continued, updated literature regarding student learning opportunities and their impacts, and when they are best experienced. This aids the perpetual informed, and reformed, practitioner efforts that continuously strive for better postsecondary student success outcomes.

The Research Problem Student Learning Opportunities are widely recognized as high-impact practices that promote academic, professional, and personal development (Finley & McNair, 2013). In secondary education, students may participate in dual 46nrolment, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, service learning, and extracurricular leadership (Noor, 2025). These experiences are frequently cited in college applications and are believed to foster college readiness. Conley's (2007) multidimensional framework for college readiness, which includes cognitive strategies, content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills, underscores the importance of such experiences in preparing students for postsecondary success. Federal and state investments in college readiness programs reflect this belief. For example, the U.S. Department of Education allocated approximately $18.4 billion to Title I grants in fiscal year 2024, a portion of which supports readiness initiatives (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Similarly, following other Covid-19 aid packages, nearly $472 million in Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds were spent on college and career readiness programs (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2023). Programs such as GEAR UP provide multi-year support to economically disadvantaged students, further emphasizing the role of high schools in preparing students for college-level work (U.S. Department of Education, 2025).

At the postsecondary level, universities invest heavily in first-year programming and engagement initiatives to promote college success. The NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) identifies several High-Impact Practices (HIPs) that correlate with student success, including learning communities, undergraduate research, service learning, and study abroad (NSSE, 2023). To ensure students start successfully in their 1st semester, Institutions such as San Diego State University charge a $337 First-Year Experience Fee to fund advising, orientation, and academic support (San Diego State University, 2024). Nationally, student services, including first-year programming, student activities, and academic support, account for a significant portion of the $712 billion spent by postsecondary institutions (Leasor & Stange, 2025). Despite widespread implementation and investment in SLOs at both levels, college persistence and completion rates remain uneven, particularly among students from historically underserved backgrounds (Reber, Kalkat, & Goodman, 2025; Kurlaender, Reed, & Hurtt, 2019). This raises a perplexing question: are SLOs more effective at creating college success outcomes when implemented before college or during college? While both sectors claim responsibility for student success, there is limited empirical evidence comparing the timing and context of SLOs and their relative impact. Moreover, institutional efforts may be siloed, with high schools and colleges operating under

different assumptions about student readiness and support. If both high schools and universities invest in SLOs to promote student success, yet outcomes remain inconsistent, then more must be known about where SLOs are most impactful. Understanding whether precollege or college-level SLOs better predict engagement, persistence, and satisfaction can help institutions align their efforts and optimize resource allocation.

This study seeks to fill that gap by comparing the influence of SLOs reported in the CommonApp with those reported in NSSE, using matched data to assess their predictive value for college success. Significance of the Study This study contributes to a growing body of research on college readiness and student success by focusing on practice-based evidence. Rather than theorizing about institutional responsibility, it examines the tangible activities, SLOs, that students engage in and how those activities relate to their outcomes. By comparing precollege and college-level SLOs, the study offers insights into the timing, context, depth and effectiveness of engagement practices. In addition, necessary contributions to the literature concerned with improving postsecondary student success outcomes are always of need for updating.

By exploring recent students of the post-Covid 19 class, the impacts of these activities may be more varied and even the student learning opportunities themselves may have been realigned. This study will lead that new generation of postsecondary student success research. The findings have implications for policy, institutional practice, and empirical research. At the policy level, the study can inform federal and state decisions about funding priorities for college readiness and first-year support. At the institutional level, it can guide high schools and universities in designing and aligning SLOs to maximize impact. At the research level, it contributes to the literature on High-Impact Practices (HIP) and the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. It aims to create a framework that future researchers can use to compare SLOs across cohorts, along with an approach to methodically link CommonAPP application data with institutional student success measurements. Ultimately, this study aims to help educators and policymakers answer two practical questions: what student learning opportunities should we be targeting for student engagement, and where should we invest our time and energy to best support postsecondary student success: before college or during college? By providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of SLOs across the two educational contexts, the study offers a data-driven contribution to a longstanding and complex problem of student transitions and success.

Transcending the 'humanistic versus neoliberal' narratives? Preservice students' profiling of globally competent teachers and visions of 'possible professional self'

YING Ji

In the past few decades, the educational agenda of teacher education programmes (TEPs) in many countries has shifted from simply training 'locally ready' teachers "towards globally competent teachers" (GCTs) (Darji & Lang-Wojtasik, 2014, p. 55; Ying et al., 2025). Global competence is featured increasingly as "a component of teachers' professional competence" (Orazbayeva, 2016, p. 2659). This shows that globalisation is shaping teachers' professional identity as they are expected to "think, and teach beyond

local boundaries" (Goodwin, 2021, p. 5). Cobb and Couch (2018) noted this shift was well reflected in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports (2016, 2018) that accentuate TEPs to play central roles in preparing GCTs. They argue that the OECD discourses facilitate "a new form of pedagogic identity" (p.37) and "a new form of global pedagogical governance" (p.35). However, there is so far no common profiling of the professional identity of a GCT, or what a GCT should be like or do. PSTs' understanding of global competence, its significance, and relevance for the teaching profession varies across contexts (Guler & Ullom, 2023). In some contexts, PSTs are found to be ill-prepared to teach global knowledge and issues (Guler & Ullom, 2023; Merryfield, 2000).

Often, teacher education is regarded as serving the local educational needs by preparing teachers who are equipped with subject-focused knowledge and knowledge about the local society (Koh et al., 2022). Global competence might not be a commonly used notion among teachers and PSTs (Karanikola et al., 2022). Or developing global competence is not regarded as essential by some PSTs (Guler & Ullom, 2023; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Patrick et al., 2014). This dynamic is reinforced as the teaching profession is strongly defined by testing and accountability regimes across the world (Ro, 2018).

Hong Kong is an international city. On one hand, raising global awareness and perspectives among its people persists as a major concern for curriculum developers, policymakers, and educational institutions (Lee & Leung, 2005). Cultivating global awareness and perspectives is also listed in the teaching and learning goals of its universities with TEPs (Zou, 2021). On the other hand, it is believed that the highly exam-oriented, competitive education system in Hong Kong makes it challenging for teachers to understand their profession beyond 'teaching to test' (Berry, 2014). It is in this context that this study explores how local PSTs in Hong Kong profile GCTs and how they envision their professional self as a GCT in their future career. Specifically, based on semi-structured interviews with 18 PSTs enrolled in Bachelor of Education programmes at University X, this study aims to answer the following questions: 1. How do preservice teachers in Hong Kong profile globally competent teachers? 2. How do they envision their professional selves as global competent teachers in their future teaching career?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 local Hong Kong students enrolled in Bachelor of Education programmes in University X in Hong Kong (Table 1). Semi-structured interviews allowed researchers to ask prepared, open-ended questions to answer the research questions while allowing participants space and flexibility to share their perceptions, ideas, and reflections in the order and to the extent they prefer (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Thus, it fits as a data collection method for the purpose of this study. Ethical approval was obtained from the University Human Ethics Review Committee (Ref no. anonymised for peer review). To gather data on experiences and reflection with a relatively diverse disciplinary background of participants with certain experience of learning and reflections on interview questions, participants from Year 2 or above from different Bachelor of Education programmes were invited to participate. Online or face-to-face interviews were conducted in Mandarin or Cantonese based on participants' preferences. Interviews, lasting from 26 min to 61 min, were recorded

(audio- or video-) with the participants' consent. Interviews were transcribed into simplified (Mandarin) or traditional (Cantonese) Chinese respectively and analysed through a thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The transcripts were read repeatedly to identify, interpret, and theorise how PSTs in Hong Kong profile GCTs, how they envision the possibilities and challenges of becoming a global competent teacher in their future teaching career.

Findings show that the participants profile GSTs and envision themselves as GSTs as teachers with global, national, and local knowledge and perspectives, interculturally competent, inclusive teachers, and 'competitive' teachers with hard and soft skills. Meanwhile, they also envision challenges, including exam-oriented school culture, low self-efficacy in global competence, and unequal educational landscape, to become and practice as GCTs in future profession. PSTs' profiling of GCTs resonates with both what is termed as 'humanistic' and 'neoliberal' narratives of professional identities of GCTs in the existing literature.

The first profiling of GCTs as teachers with global knowledge and perspectives echoes with GCTs as globally minded and aware of global issues and challenges and possessing skillsets to help their students to acquire global knowledge, awareness, and perspectives (Brennan & Holliday, 2019; Crawford et al., 2020; Darji & Lang-Wojtasik, 2014).

The second profiling of GTCs as 'interculturally competent, inclusive teachers' echoes the profiling of teachers with awareness of student diversity (e.g. Kopish, 2016; O'Connor & Zeichner, 2011), capacity to teach students from diverse backgrounds and in diverse contexts (e.g. Darji & Lang-Wojtasik, 2014; Parmigiani, Jones, Kunnari, et al., 2022; Quezada, 2011; Wu, 2023), and the capacity to equip students with cross-cultural understanding and awareness (e.g. Brennan & Holliday, 2019; Darji & Lang-Wojtasik, 2014). Moreover, GCTs' practices to treat students equally, regardless of their backgrounds and academic performance, show their understandings of GCTs as critical pedagogical agents for change with 'professional agency' (Byker & Putman, 2019) and a commitment to equity and social justice (Crawford et al., 2020; Kopish, 2016). Meanwhile, PSTs' profiling also shows 'neoliberal' narratives of professional identities as they view GCTs as teachers with 'competitiveness' (Cobb & Couch, 2018).

Therefore, it can be argued that Hong Kong PSTs' profiles and visions transcend the binary 'humanistic versus neoliberal' narratives around the professional identities of GCTs. For most participants in this study, GCTs can be simultaneously globally minded, interculturally competent, inclusive practitioners, and competitive employees who could successfully navigate the global labour market and prepare their students as such.

Beginning Teachers' Identity Conflicts and the Negotiation of Professional Dialogue in China

PI Xuedi

Introduction

In the context of globalisation, teachers are recognised as a powerful force in promoting equity, ensuring access, improving educational quality, and contributing to sustainable

global development (UNESCO, 2015). Despite international efforts toward the professionalisation of teaching, beginning teachers remain particularly vulnerable, often experiencing "reality shock" and facing a high risk of attrition, a trend evident across Asia, Europe, and North America In China, the identity crises of beginning teachers stem from tensions between personal ideals and societal expectations. Educational reforms have reshaped conceptions of the "teacher's role," which requires constant adaptation to social and knowledge changes. Teacher identity is generally understood as how teachers see themselves, and how they are recognised by others, within specific educational and social contexts. Identity is closely linked to self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction, and thus plays a critical role in teachers' professional development. While research on beginning teachers in China has expanded, much of it has emphasised identity construction. However, few studies have included both the personal and contextual sides to explain the complicated process of beginning teachers' identity construction. This tension makes beginning teachers' identity an important arena for studying conflict, disagreement, and dialogue in education.

Objectives

This study draws on an integrated theoretical framework with identity conflicts theory and field theory, aiming to understand how beginning teachers construct and develop their identities in the educational context. Specifically, it focuses on teachers' identity tensions between personal aspiration and social demands. Also, this qualitative study tries to explore beginning teachers' their emotional experiences and coping strategies of identity conflicts.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative methodology rooted in narrative inquiry. Referred to as a "way of understanding experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479), it underscored the need for a narrative perspective in reproducing and comprehending experiences. It wished to sample 'typical' cases with a certain 'universal' significance. This study selected three public primary schools: School A (top school, suburb), School B (regular school, suburb), and School C (top school, urban). School C has better educational resources than suburban schools (School A and School B) in terms of facilities, quality of teachers, and number of students enrolled. The top schools have a long history, a higher societal reputation, and better student performance than regular schools. The participants in this study consisted of three groups which are (1) seven beginning teachers; (2) three primary school principals; and (3) seven other teachers working in three primary schools. Beginning teachers were selected using a purposive sampling method, which resulted in selecting participants relevant to the research topic. The selection criteria included the following: years of experience ranging from 1-3 years; work experience; academic background; willingness to participate in the tracking survey and willingness to share their stories; and practice interacting with parents, school leaders, and colleagues. The interviews included motivation to become a teacher, learning experiences, ideal teacher image, self-positioning in the teaching position, recent work experiences, challenges or worries at work, future career plans, and relationships with other teachers, parents, and students. The interview period was from November 2022 to April 2024, totaling 30 online (voice or video calls) and on-site interviews with beginning teachers. A qualitative, narrative inquiry methodology was adopted, drawing on Connelly and Clandinin's (2006)

three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to examine beginning teachers' identity construction. Participants' narratives were analyzed through three dimensions: temporality (past, current, future), the person and the social (personal experience and relationship with others), and place (the situated sociocultural context).

Findings

Based on the study's research objectives and questions, the following insights have emerged:

(1)Beginning teacher identity initially emerges from an ambiguous and idealised image of teachers shaped during childhood experiences. Consistent with previous research, this study confirms that positive role models provided by former teachers are critical socialisation factors influencing the construction of teacher identity (Flores & Day, 2006). This early stage of identity formation is often marked by a strong emphasis on former teachers' expert authority and shaped by the beginning teachers' emotional experiences as students.

(2)The first semester is crucial for a beginning teacher's identity development, as it involves constructing their ideal identity through self and environmental influences (Ding & Wei, 2024). This phase is characterised by a diversity of teachers' ideal standards, and they gradually develop three types of ideal identities: policy-orientation, self-orientation, and collective-orientation. Beginning teachers' policy-oriented identifications are shaped by a desire to teach within a 'stable' institutional structure and to work under an 'efficient' management system. This tendency of teacher identity occurs because systematic teacher education increases the policy sensitivity of beginning teachers, leading them to consider national policy as a guiding reference for the ideal image. There is also a proportion of beginning teachers whose ideal identity construct is self-authored. According to Magolda (2023), people prefer to define their own sense of self. The study found that the dominance of self-goals for beginning teachers, rather than policy reliance or group identity, is since they may not have access to effective support from the environment. Perceptions within the school come from their interactions and observations with leaders, mentors, and colleagues. Some teachers may not be able to find an ideal frame of reference at the beginning of their career and may temporarily define their position based on existing experiences. Apart from these two types, most beginning teachers are collective with an ideal identity. They expect to be members of a teacher's group, with a collective identity as a developmental goal Beginning teachers' construction of an ideal identity is a process of active imitation of role models and proximity to affiliation with a group.

(3)During the second semester and third year of working, beginning teachers already have basic teaching experience. They gradually come to realise that the content of in-service training does not fully address the specific challenges they encounter in their own teaching practice. In China, teachers are hired and assessed in their first year, and their performance decides whether they are retained. Therefore, in the adaptation period, the ideal identity of beginning teachers is characterised by a concern for interpersonal relationships, teaching effectiveness, and self-development.

(4)Beginning teachers experienced conflicts between their ideal and actual identities early in their careers. In particular, conflict crisis refers to the problem of the multiply defined self in terms of educational practice, social relationship, and professional learning. Beginning teachers' identity crisis highlights the reality that the difference between ideals and practice does exist in the field of education (Song & Zhang, 2012; Voss & Kunter, 2020).

(5)Informed by identity conflict theory (Baumeister et al., 1985), identity conflict is marked by challenges in satisfying all needs and expectations resulting from different expectations, and the beginning teacher may feel that a situation makes it impossible to decide. As a result, tensions between two types of identity (ideal and actual identity) can lead to three outcomes: (a) integrating ideal and actual identity, which arises from the conflict between individual learning experiences and student needs; (b) separating ideal and real identity, driven by personal growth aspirations and performative assessment; (c) and identity collapse, driven by evaluating the costs and benefits of leaving the job.

(6)Beginning teachers enter a pre-organised field of education where institutionalised expectations, performance criteria, and cultural norms define how they view and behave as professionals. Their identity develops in response to the symbolic capital valued in the school environment, sometimes resulting in conflicts between field-imposed roles and personal values.

(7)Teachers are caught between grand narratives propagated by the government and the more fragmented and contradictory expectations of local social actors. In this sense, beginning teachers will consciously discipline their behaviour and rethink their identity as teachers: Am I a teacher of students or a nanny for children? Are these my responsibility or someone else's? Am I a collaborator or a service provider for parents?

(8)Simultaneously, social expectations and policy motivations sometimes surpass expectations, which results in teachers not being sufficiently ready to handle pragmatic problems following completion of their training courses. The good teachers expected by the state, such as the "Four haves Good Teachers", "Spirit of Educator"are highlighting the professional virtues of dedication, devotion, expecting teachers to maintain integrity without being driven by fame or fortune. The symbolisation of the teachers with virtue makes teachers become an existence separated from their body and experience as the boundaries of teachers' work activities begin to blur.

In conclusion, these identity conflicts not only reveal tensions between teachers' ideals and realities but also highlight the need for professional dialogues that acknowledge disagreement as a productive force for growth. Teachers' self-narratives help to create their sense of reality and teach them the ideals of a career. Ultimately, new instructors will also attempt to manage these conflicts.

Implications

Given that the devolution of governance in China often intensifies performance-based accountability and pressures teachers to compromise their identities, this present study highlights some implications for teacher educators and policymakers. Teacher training

should encourage teachers to explore self-directed learning and provide opportunities for professional development. Considering teachers' identity conflicts in interpersonal relationships, the educational system needs to maintain a balance between respecting teachers and valuing education. At the policy and school level, there is a need to create platforms for teachers to express their voices instead of being blamed by the public after their investing teaching efforts and emotional investment. While beginning teachers worldwide face identity conflicts, this study shows that in China these tensions are particularly shaped by policy-driven expectations and cultural narratives of teacher virtue. This highlights how disagreement takes distinct forms across contexts, enriching comparative perspectives. By contrasting these findings with studies in Europe and North America, the study demonstrates how cultural and institutional demands shape identity conflicts in different ways, offering new insights into comparative studies of disagreement in education.

In addition, this study contributes to Baumeister's identity conflict theory by highlighting the motivations and strategies beginning teachers to manage identity conflicts across different scenarios. Additionally, this study extends identity conflict theory, showing that beginning teachers' identities are closely tied to the school environment. Identity conflicts are more likely to be resolved when beginning teachers can affiliate with experienced colleagues who have successfully navigated similar tensions. For the further research，mentors and apprentices, as well as social relationships, play an important role in the process of developing teachers' identities. It would be interesting to compare the experiences of individuals and mentors within a similar situation of identity conflicts.

Developing Understanding in a Diverse Danish High School: Teacher Perspectives on 'A Pedagogy of the Unknowable'
HARADA Akiko

Recently, the diversity in schools across Nordic countries has increased, which requires teachers to possess intercultural competence and adopt culturally responsive pedagogical practices (Ferguson-Patrick, 2020). Thus, creating equitable and inclusive educational environments for immigrant and refugee students has become a critical concern. However, limited attention has been paid to teacher education programs in the context of practical training (Weiss, Braun, Schlegel, & Kiel, 2024).

This study explored how teachers are challenged in diverse classrooms in complex situations in everyday practices, focusing on Denmark, a nation known for implementing Europe's stringent immigration policies along with a rise in nationalist sentiment. In contrast to nations, such as the United States, which were founded as settler societies with experiences of a multicultural society, some European countries have historically had a dominant ethnic group and began to experience multicultural societies much later due to immigration (Rissanen, 2021). This pattern is also evident in Denmark and other Nordic countries. While Denmark is a highly secularised society, similar to its Nordic neighbours, the majority of its population is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church. It follows certain values, such as equality, equity, and solidarity. Once renowned for their high levels of social trust, these countries are now facing the challenge of

increasing polarisation stemming from deepening social, economic, ethnic, and cultural divisions (Rissanen, 2021). Scholars have argued that when equality is interpreted as 'sameness', it can obscure cultural and racial diversity within national and educational contexts. Khawaja (2022) demonstrated that in Danish educational settings, interpreting equality as sameness leads to undifferentiated pedagogical methods that tend to overlook cultural and racial differences. Furthermore, teacher education programmes that explicitly address multiculturalism, ethnicity, and anti-racist pedagogy within Danish higher education are limited. This trend is evident in other Nordic countries as well. Sweden and Norway also face challenges in teacher education regarding the training of teachers from diverse student backgrounds (Mock-Muñoz de Luna et al., 2020). Feminist pedagogy, which critiques critical pedagogy, is helpful in analysing the interactions between teachers and students in schools. In a broad sense, critical pedagogy Is an endeavour to elucidate how various forms, configurations, and complexities of (social, cultural, and economic) power and inequality manifest within educational settings and how these are contested (Apple et al., 2009). However, Gore (2014) raised concerns regarding the role of teachers as potential agents of social transformation, as envisioned by McLaren (1989). Gore argued that claims regarding teacher empowerment risk attributing extraordinary capacities to teachers while maintaining a conception of agency that overlooks the contextual constraints within which teachers operate. Gore (2014) and Ellsworth (1989) highlighted how liberatory teaching discourses can impose unrealistic expectations on educators and potentially silence student voices.

This study drew on Ellsworth's concept of 'A Pedagogy of the Unknowable' (1989), which emphasises the impossibility of fully understanding the students' experiences of oppression. In addition, this study aligns with Spivak's position that the search for a coherent narrative is 'counterproductive' (Spivak, 1988, p. 272). In everyday life, context and meaning are neither pregiven nor explainable through the grand theories of causality. Rather, they are assumed to be co-constructed, multiple, complex, open-ended, and constantly changing. They are created and recreated through innumerable small and scattered practices. Agency is reconceptualised within fluid and mutable social conditions. These conditions are continuously shaped by the interactions between diverse agents dispersed across numerous locations (Lather, 2014). Although the extant literature discusses issues relevant to racism and discrimination, knowledge of the challenges that teachers face in diverse classrooms in complex situations within the school context is limited. This study aimed to address the research gap through the case study of a Danish high school.

The present study employed a qualitative approach that Included school documents, educational materials, classroom observations, teacher-meeting observations, and semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, and students. Data were collected in 2023 and 2024 from a Danish high school characterised by students with diverse backgrounds, where 60% of the students were ethnic minorities and the remaining 40% were ethnic Danes diagnosed with autism. We explored how Danish teachers interpret and respond to the needs of students requiring special support within a socio–political context marked by strict immigration policies, rising nationalism, and egalitarian ideals that obscure cultural differences. In this school, the ethnic Danes were also a minority with special needs, and some of them were sexual minorities who had difficulty living in

the majority culture. Therefore, the school represented a highly diverse multicultural community.

To analyse the data, we applied thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process began with immersing ourselves in the data through repeated readings to gain a thorough understanding of its content. We then proceeded to generate initial codes, capturing key features of the data that were pertinent to our research questions. After coding, we examined the data for recurring patterns and meaningful connections, which allowed us to identify potential themes. The findings indicated the complex and evolving nature of everyday educational practices and the challenges faced by the teachers and the principal.

1) The school has implemented a unique, collaborative, and student-centred system to support its diverse students. A key feature of the school's support system is its mentor system, in which every student is assigned a mentor to develop close relationships and address personal and academic issues. Initially developed for students with autism, this system has been extended to all students, including ethnic minorities, and has yielded positive results.

2) Teachers recognised their power over the students and attempted to capture student voices as 'they know themselves better than we do'. Their attitudes appear to be a 'pedagogy of the unknowable', acknowledging that they cannot fully understand the students' lived experiences. Teachers were aware that it is not easy to understand the students as each one has a different background, whether as refugees or labour immigrants, ant the country they are from, and their class and family backgrounds are also diverse.

3) Teachers focused on understanding the students as individuals rather than representatives of their ethnic, religious, or autistic backgrounds. They denied the coherent narratives of these minorities, for students' identities are fluid. As Lather (2014) pointed out, students' agency is transformed into fluid and ever-changing social conditions. In response, the teachers continuously revised their perspectives on students through information gathered from the students, their colleagues, and continuous and spontaneous meetings. Through daily, small-scale practices, they engage in the ongoing reconstruction of their understanding of students, whose realities are diverse, complex, and constantly shifting.

This study implies the potential for teacher practices that move beyond a singular focus on empowerment narratives—such as "liberation from discrimination"—as the sole foundation for educational action. By emphasising the question "What can we do for you?" in place of asserting "What we can do," (Gore, 2014) , this perspective encourages a more reflective and responsive engagement with students. The findings also highlight the importance of context-sensitive educational approaches, underscoring the practical significance of a teacher's stance in understanding each student as a unique individual, as opposed to viewing them as a representative of a single ethnic, religious, or disability-related category. The primary limitation of this study lies in its focus on a single Danish high school through an in-depth case study. Although the school represents an example

of a super-diverse society, the specificity of its sociocultural context makes it difficult to generalise the findings. Future research should examine whether these findings hold across different sociopolitical contexts, as well as in other educational stages beyond secondary schooling.

Peer-reviewing for national and international journals: Chinese academics' experiences in the humanities and social sciences

WANG Pengjuan & Hugo HORTA

Peer review is a key pillar of the publishing process in scientific journals, contributing to the legitimacy of the scientific system and its endeavors (Yu et al., 2025). Although well established, the peer-review process has been criticized from time to time relatively to its efficiency, effectiveness and biases (e.g., Tennant & Ross-Hellauer, 2020). Understanding the experiences that academics have with peer-reviewing is of relevance, for the sake of ensuring that peer-review remains a sustainable practice for researchers, academia and science (Severin & Chataway, 2020). There is a growing number of research focused on the experiences of reviewers, but these studies are done mostly on peer-review experiences with international journals (Balietti et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2013; Mulligan et al., 2013). Most of these studies are also focused on disciplines of science, engineering, and health (Barnett et al., 2024; Bianchi & Squazzoni, 2015; Csiszar, 2016; Donovan et al., 2020; García et al., 2015; Nobarany et al., 2016). Only recently a few studies have focused on the peer-review experiences in the humanities and social sciences (e.g., Atjonen, 2019) and discussed the practices of reviewing in national journals (e.g., Gabets, 2025), thus underlining the lack of research focused on the experiences of peer-reviewing in both the humanities and social sciences and for national journals especially those in non-English contexts.

This study assesses the peer-review experiences of Chinese academics in national and international journals in the fields of the humanities and social sciences. The focus on Chinese academics based in mainland China is important because the country is a relatively recent but key contributor to scientific knowledge globally (Marginson, 2022), while at the same time, it has also a major and dynamic national journal system (Wang, 2020). This study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do Chinese academics experience the peer review process in national and international journals in the humanities and social sciences? (2) What are the key differences in peer reviewing for national and international journals?

This study is based on interviews with 31 Chinese academics in the humanities and social sciences with peer review experiences for Chinese and/or international journals. The interviewees are based in different universities in China, and were randomly selected and invited, or were mentioned by other interviewees following snowball sampling techniques. Of the total interviewed academics, 14 reviewed only for Chinese journals, 4 reviewed only for international journals, and 13 reviewed for Chinese and international journals. In the literature, the function of the editor is regarded as one of gatekeeping the standards and quality of journals and assuring scholarly conventions of a given field (Sparks, 2014). The editor is a central node in the knowledge production network connecting reviewers, authors, and readers. According to our analysis, this position is

significant in both national and international journals. However, the authority of the editor in national journals can be quite different, due to the functioning of decision and operational structures of the journals.

The focus of the editors in national journals may not be entirely concerned with scientific matters, but also with those of the ideological arena. It is the view of the interviewees that while in international journals, the editor often respects and values the comments provided by peer reviewers, editors in national journals are much more apt to decide on a submitted manuscript by dismissing the opinions of the reviewers and the feedback received from the peer review process. In national journals, the position and the role of reviewers self-reported by the interviewees are "supporting" or "subordinate" to the decision-making of editors, since the latter are the ones giving the final editorial decision. The positions of editors and peer-reviewers are different, and each serves a specific purpose, whereas reviewers exercise above anything else advisory power (directed both at authors and editors towards quality control and development), the editors have decision-making power throughout the entire submission and assessment process. On the surface, this is similar to the practice of international journals. However, unlike most international journals, the editor in national journals not only takes the screening and commenting of the peer-reviewers into account, or may outright dismiss it, and assumes a decision also based on other factors such as ideology, maintenance of status quo, publication quota per issue, and others. This means that the position of the reviewers is much more marginal in national journals compared to international journals, when it comes to the peer-reviewers/editor standing and influence concerning decisions on the submitted manuscripts, because the editors may decide based on non-scientific reasonings, and on solely or mostly on the comments of the reviewers national journals operate in smaller academic fields compared to international journals, and senior academics with greater academic experience are preferred to ensure a degree of expertise and reliability of the peer-review process.

The invitation then follows the logic of inviting those with higher academic ranks as a signal for experience and seniority. International journals seem to follow a logic that is more akin to recognition based on publications (particularly in the same journal that extends the invitation), thus opening the review process to a broader set of potential reviewers. The interviewees pointed out that the overreliance and concentration of reviewing opportunities on senior academics could lead to unfavorable consequences for the national scientific system, including the practices of proxy reviewing, pro-forma reviewing, and conservative gatekeeping that could prevent new ideas from being published. A major concern regarding national journals mentioned by the interviewees was about "renqing (favor)". This social practice in China concerns the fostering of long-term relationships by engaging and maintaining good relations in terms of favor exchange with appropriate academic circles and specific journals of interest. By doing so, as the interviewees mentioned, they would increasing the possibilities to publish their own manuscripts in those journals.

This concern was particularly stressed by interviewees in the ranks of assistant and associate professor. The interviewees report a completely different dynamic when it comes to international journals. They identify "responsibility" and "mutual benefits" as

the most common agencies followed by Chinese academics, and academics participate in peer-reviewing more for a sense of being good scientific citizens, learning and reciprocation. The interviewees also mentioned that in international journals the dynamics of "relationship-based submissions" is far less common or even inexistent, and thus the motivations to review relate more to ones related to contribution, learning and development. Therefore, the interviewees reported that it was easier to choose to review manuscripts of interest, and they felt considerable autonomy to decline review invitations from international journals. The cost of declining invitations to review lies primarily in "failing to fulfill responsibilities" rather than "failing to maintain good relations with the journal." This is completely different from the motivations of engaging in peer-review in national journals which seem more strategic and related to competition to access resources, reputation and survival or career progression. This study investigated Chinese academics' different review experiences for national journals and international journals. The findings signal that there are different peer review processes, role of editor, reviewer position, reviewer qualification, reviewer habitus, leading to different peer review culture and mechanism in these two publication fields.

This study adds new insights into the differences between national and international journals, it also makes conceptual contributions to understanding peer review institution from a field perspective. One of the limitations of this study is the restricted interview sample. Further studies could explore the following questions: do the motivations of Chinese scholars vary between reviewing for domestic and international academic journals? What are the factors that shape their different peer review motivations? Answering these questions could provide critical insights into the national and international academic engagement of Chinese academics in today's world.

Academics' views on how peer reviewing in journals is valued in contemporary academia

Pubali GHOSH & Hugo HORTA

For a considerable period in the past, productivity in academic research received substantial attention in higher education research and policy making. In comparison, peer review, which plays a critical role in research productivity, has received scant attention and has come to focus only recently. There is a growing perception that peer review in journals is in a state of crisis. Long duration of review processes, lack of good quality and reliable reviews, and reviewer biases increasingly challenge sustainability of peer review (Horta and Jung, 2024). With the publish-or-perish culture, there has been an overwhelming increase in the quantity of manuscript submissions to journals. The growth rate of number of submissions to journals is higher than that of reviewers. Editors are faced with the challenge of meeting high demand for reviewers. Reviewers are often fatigued, which can impact review quality (ibid). Past studies on peer review have largely focused on peer review practices and ways to improve academic rigour. Few have focused on the determinants of peer reviewing in journals and the existing studies are mostly quantitative (Horta and Santos, 2024).

This qualitative study seeks to understand academic's views on how peer reviewing is valued in contemporary academia. It explores the determinants underlying the motives

of academics to do a peer review of journal articles (hereby peer review), how academics feel that peer review is (and should be) valued by the universities where they work and how academics situate peer review practices within academic career progression.

Participants were sourced from Scopus searches and invited via emails. Virtual one-to-one interviews were carried out with 59 academics belonging to different disciplines and age groups from across the world. Interviews were carried out in English through online video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. An average interview lasted between 40 minutes to one hour. Participants' review experience ranged from reviewing manuscripts for over a year to over 40 years. Participants were asked open-ended questions regarding their views and experiences in peer reviewing. Interviews were transcribed in English, cleaned and uploaded in NVIVO. Data was analyzed using an inductive thematic approach.

This presentation will discuss preliminary findings from the study. The determinants of peer review were influenced by several forces such as scholars' individual preferences, seniority level, academic disciplines they belonged to, national and regional institutional settings, and their countries' economic contexts among others. The motive to review papers for journals and the choice of papers to be reviewed varied based on the years of experience an academic had in peer review.

For the majority participants, the two main reasons for reviewing papers were: 1. To learn from other scholars and stay abreast in their fields and 2. To give back to the academic community. Another reason, especially among senior researchers, was to help maintain research and publication standards. Senior scholars explained how their motives to review papers evolved over the years. With increased seniority and resulting workload, scholars became more selective regarding acceptance of review invitations and were more inclined to accept those sent by their colleagues and fellow scholars within their networks. Institutional setting was an important factor in motivating scholars to review papers. Younger scholars were more prolific reviewers in countries with institutional settings that provided rewards in the form of credits for career advancement.

Going further, the presentation will reveal scholars' opinions on whether universities placed adequate value on peer review work and how peer review can be more valued through monetary and/or non-monetary rewards. A large proportion of participants believed that universities should give more value to their work as reviewers for journals. However, a few expressed that peer review fell within their academic duties, it should be done for altruistic reasons and that reviewers themselves benefited from the experience. Participants were divided in their opinions regarding monetary versus non-monetary compensation for peer review. Younger participants from developing countries tended to prefer monetary rewards for peer review.

Among those preferring non-monetary rewards, some delved into the complexities involved in providing monetary compensation and explained why it should not be encouraged. Majority interviewees stressed that peer review work should be considered by universities as an important factor in determining career progression. Participants also highlighted journals' role in valuing and recognizing peer review. A substantial proportion

of participants belonging to certain disciplines stressed the need for paid journals to recognize peer review work by offering monetary rewards. Junior and middle-level scholars expressed how journals providing recognition in forms of credits and certificates etc. that are recognised by universities for career progression was an important motivating factor for peer review. However, there were some scholars who problematized peer review evaluation processes and highlighted the drawbacks of involving poorly evaluated peer review work as a factor for career progression.

The presentation will then turn to the matter of training reviewers. Researchers from different disciplines shared their thoughts on when was the right time in an academic's career to begin reviewing journal articles. A majority of scholars in natural sciences believed that researchers were not qualified to review manuscripts unless they themselves had adequate experience in publishing their own works. Participants conveyed whether they encouraged their students to review papers in journals and if they did, they explained how they encouraged/trained their students to review papers. The study provides valuable collective insights on determinants of peer reviewing in academia in various institutional settings, belonging to different geographical regions and economic contexts of the world. It provides in-depth qualitative explanations to previous quantitative findings regarding peer review practices.

The study gives a deeper understanding of the nuances of peer reviewing motives among male and female scholars belonging to different age-groups, and academic disciplines. The findings provide valuable information to academics, managers, and policymakers about how academics understand peer review and how the practice can be more valued as part of career progression and trajectories in higher education. Given the crisis that peer review is facing at present, this study makes significant contributions in understanding how peer review can be made more sustainable in the future.

Translating Justice: Negotiating Global and Local Discourses of Sustainability in Chinese Higher Education

HUANG Xiaoyu

Sustainability has become one of the defining concepts in higher education policy and research over the past two decades. Yet how sustainability is framed—what dimensions are emphasized, which values are foregrounded—varies greatly across contexts. In an earlier systematic mapping of Chinese-language research on sustainability education, a clear pattern emerged: the majority of studies centered on environmental education, ecological awareness, and campus greening initiatives, while social and economic aspects—especially those related to justice, equity, and participation—were largely missing. This imbalance was not simply the result of empirical focus but of the keyword design itself. The search terms used in that mapping—such as "education for sustainable development," "green education," and "ecological civilization education"—are conceptually rooted in environmental paradigms. They inadvertently excluded research that addresses sustainability through the lenses of social equity, moral education, or developmental justice. This methodological limitation prompted a deeper question: how is sustainability itself defined and translated within Chinese discourses, and what local terms embody its justice dimension?

Building on this observation, the present study explores the conceptual and linguistic boundaries of justice in Chinese higher education discourses on sustainability. It argues that before comparative analysis or systematic review can be meaningfully conducted, it is necessary to define what justice means in the Chinese context—both semantically and ideologically. The goal is to reveal how local moral and political logics translate, transform, and sometimes resist global sustainability frameworks. Background and Problem Statement Global frameworks, such as UNESCO's (2020) Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7), emphasize justice-oriented learning—values of equity, participation, and recognition as core to sustainability. Internationally, scholars such as Schlosberg (2007, 2009) and Misiaszek and Rodrigues (2023) have advanced multidimensional understandings of environmental justice and justice-based environmental sustainability (JBES), calling for education that links social transformation with planetary ethics. However, in the Chinese context, sustainability is often embedded in state-led narratives of ecological civilization (生态文明)—a moral-political vision integrating environmental protection, social harmony, and moral cultivation. Within this framework, justice tends to be framed as social order, balance, or moral virtue rather than procedural fairness or redistribution. Expressions such as common prosperity (共同富裕) and educational fairness (教育公平) serve as the primary moral vocabulary connecting sustainability to national modernization and governance.

This localized conceptualization poses two challenges. First, it constrains sustainability discourse to environmental and moral domains, leaving less room for social and epistemic justice. Second, it complicates comparative research: using globally derived frameworks without translation risks obscuring the cultural, political, and epistemic underpinnings of Chinese interpretations. Thus, the key question is not whether Chinese sustainability discourse conforms to global standards, but how justice is locally constructed and reinterpreted through translation.

Research Aims and Questions

The study seeks to construct a contextualized framework for understanding justice within Chinese sustainability discourses, with the following objectives: 1.To identify and map justice-related terms and concepts within Chinese higher education policy and academic literature on sustainability; 2.To analyze the moral, political, and developmental logics embedded in these terms; 3.To compare localized expressions of justice with global justice frameworks in sustainability education; 4.To develop a conceptual translation framework that can inform more reflexive and inclusive comparative research. Together, these aims guide the central inquiry: How is justice semantically and ideologically constructed in Chinese sustainability discourse, and how can this understanding enrich global comparative studies of higher education?

Methodology

This research adopts a discursive and comparative textual analysis to explore how justice is framed and translated across policy and academic discourse. Data Sources. The analysis draws upon national and institutional documents, including China Education

Modernization 2035, Outline for Building an Ecological Civilization, Action Plan for Carbon Neutrality, Guidelines for Common Prosperity, and the reports of the 18th–20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2012–2022). It also examines CSSCI-indexed journal articles addressing sustainability, educational equity, and social responsibility.

Analytical Process

1.Keyword Identification: Extract and cluster justice-related terms (e.g., fairness, harmony, equality, responsibility, virtue, collective good).

2.Semantic Grouping: Group keywords into three interpretive clusters:

1.Governance-oriented justice (responsibility, harmony, legitimacy); 2.Redistributive justice (equality, common prosperity, regional balance); 3.Moral-cultural justice (virtue, collectivism, ecological harmony).

3.Conceptual Comparison: Contrast these clusters with global justice frameworks—particularly Schlosberg's (2009) multidimensional model (distribution, procedure, recognition, capability) and Misiaszek & Rodrigues's (2023) pedagogical model of JBES.

4.Framework Construction: Synthesize a localized justice framework that articulates how Chinese sustainability discourses translate justice through ecological, developmental, and moral lenses. This framework will not impose equivalence but instead act as a translation interface, demonstrating how local epistemologies redefine global concepts of justice and sustainability.

Theoretical Positioning

The study is grounded in comparative education's concern with how knowledge and values travel across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Cowen, 2009; Marginson, 2023). It adopts the view of translation as negotiation, emphasizing that concepts never move neutrally between contexts—they are always redefined by power, history, and discourse. Justice, in this view, is a relational construct shaped by ideological and cultural forces. The discourse of ecological civilization exemplifies how sustainability is rearticulated through Confucian ethics and socialist developmentalism, transforming justice from a rights-based notion into a moral-political ideal of harmony. This approach also draws on "Asia as method" (Chen, 2010), advocating the use of regional epistemologies as sources of theoretical insight rather than objects of Western comparison. Translation, therefore, becomes both a methodological and ethical act—an effort to sustain dialogue across epistemic systems without erasing difference.

Expected Contributions

1.Conceptual Reflexivity: The study challenges the presumed universality of sustainability frameworks and highlights how local moral and political logics reshape their meanings.

2.Methodological Innovation: By integrating linguistic and cultural translation into the design of systematic mapping and comparative research, it proposes a new approach for addressing epistemic asymmetries.

3.Ethical Dialogue: It models how disagreement—particularly over the meaning of justice—can be transformed into a productive space for comparative understanding. Relevance to the CESHK 2025 Theme This research directly engages the CESHK 2025 theme, "Dialogue, Disagreement, Conflict, and the Virtues of Peer Engagement."

It treats conceptual disagreement not as a barrier but as a productive site of knowledge exchange. By interrogating how justice is translated between global and Chinese discourses of sustainability, the study reimagines comparison as an ethical practice of dialogue and translation. It invites scholars to reconsider how we understand sustainability—not as a fixed global template, but as a living conversation between multiple knowledge systems. Through the act of translating justice, comparative education can embrace pluralism, foster mutual understanding, and cultivate the civility of scholarly disagreement.

Rethinking Equality in Education: The Reverse Gender Gap and the Limits of Binary Analysis in Southeast Asia

KAMOGAWA Akiko, MORISHITA Minoru, HAGAI Saori & KUSHIMOTO Hiroko

Background of the Study

Conventionally, the gender gap in education has been understood as a disparity between men and women, in which women are afforded fewer educational opportunities and placed at a disadvantage. In recent decades, however, a new phenomenon known as the *reverse gender gap* (RGG) has emerged in higher education worldwide, where men increasingly have fewer educational opportunities than women.

This study focuses on the RGG phenomenon within higher education in Southeast Asia, seeking to elucidate its background, causes, and implications since the early 1990s. Previous research has approached the RGG from two primary perspectives. The first concerns the *rising educational attainment of women*, often referred to as the "feminisation" of higher education. The second examines *male educational disengagement*, a trend in which boys are increasingly left behind academically (UNESCO, 2022). While many studies have explored the factors driving women's growing participation in higher education, the corresponding "decline in men's educational attainment" has received comparatively less attention. According to UNGEI's (2012) *Background to Boys' Educational Underachievement*, one major reason for boys' underperformance lies in their early entry into the labour force to earn wages.

Research Framework and Methodology

This study adopts a research framework that integrates two interrelated dimensions—women's increasing educational attainment and men's relative underachievement—while also incorporating perspectives that move beyond traditional gender dualism. The research methodology combines a comprehensive literature review, statistical data analysis, and field surveys to capture both macro-level trends and micro-level experiences. Preliminary investigations were conducted in Malaysia, Thailand, and Cambodia, allowing for comparative insights into regional variations in gendered educational outcomes. In addition, the study engages with cultural and institutional contexts, including state policies, social expectations, and educational practices, to explore how social norms shape opportunities and constraints for learners of different genders. By bridging quantitative data with qualitative observations, the research seeks to illuminate the complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and historical factors that influence educational trajectories, while critically examining the limits of binary gender frameworks in understanding these dynamics.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to clarify the current state, underlying factors, and challenges associated with the RGG phenomenon in Southeast Asia, with Malaysia, Cambodia, and Thailand serving as case studies. To achieve this, the study will:

1.statistically document the current status of women's higher educational attainment in the region;
2.examine the background and driving factors behind the increase in women's participation in higher education; and
3.investigates parallel phenomena, such as the *Where Have All the Boys Gone?* or *Lost Boys* problem in Malaysia, alongside cases in Thailand and Cambodia that challenge or transcend binary gender frameworks. It critiques both the reductionist framing of women's educational disadvantage and the rigid categorization of gender, advocating instead for a nuanced understanding of gender fluidity, agency, and empowerment.

Significance and Findings of the Study

First, this study identifies the current state of the reverse gender gap phenomenon within Southeast Asian higher education and analyses the factors contributing to it. Statistical data will be organised to illustrate cross-country patterns in women's higher education attainment.

Second, drawing on the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Index* (GGI), the study examines both the positive and negative dimensions of women's educational advancement in Southeast Asia. This includes a focus on the question "Where have all the male students gone?" in the Malaysian context, as well as the implications of sexuality and gender fluidity in educational participation. The latter is based on cases from Thailand and Cambodia.

Third, the study highlights the challenges that persist despite the apparent narrowing of gender gaps in education. Even as women's educational attainment rises, this does not necessarily translate into equal participation in the labour market or leadership roles. By exploring how higher education intersects with women's professional and social engagement, the study underscores the importance of context-specific understandings of the *meaning of higher education* across Southeast Asian societies. Simultaneously, it examines the meaning of higher education for men within contemporary and historical contexts.

Ultimately, this research aims to offer new perspectives on the relationship between gender and education within the field of comparative education.

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Case of Cambodia: When Girls Surpass Boys: The Reverse Gender Gap and the Fluidity of Gender in Cambodian Education

HAGAI Saori

This study critically examines the relationship between education and gender in Cambodia, moving beyond conventional approaches that interpret the issue primarily in terms of "gender gaps." Previous research has frequently highlighted the disproportionate likelihood of girls leaving school before completion compared to boys. However, these disparities cannot be adequately explained by individual-level characteristics such as lack of academic motivation or low ability. Rather, school discontinuation among girls is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-economic and cultural factors, including poverty, parental educational background, household labor responsibilities, limited employment opportunities, and early marriage (Velasco 2001, 2004; Keng 2004; Roth 2019). Such factors collectively shape the conditions under which women navigate educational pathways and challenge simplified, individualistic explanations for gendered educational outcomes.

In recent decades, the gender gap in secondary education enrollment and dropout rates in Cambodia has been narrowing, with some data indicating that girls now slightly surpass boys in enrollment rates and demonstrate lower dropout rates (Zimmermann & Williams, 2016:128). This trend reflects not only governmental scholarship programs led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) but also the contributions of international aid donors, non-governmental organizations, and other actors supporting educational access. Economic growth and the resultant increase in household income have also facilitated higher female enrollment. Additionally, intergenerational effects are significant; mothers who were denied educational opportunities during the Pol Pot regime in 1970s have indirectly fostered an aspiration for education among their daughters. These multiple factors underscore the need to analyze female educational attainment as a socially and historically situated phenomenon, rather than reducing it to individual-level deficits.

A further critical factor contributing to women's educational advancement has been state-led gender policy initiatives. In Cambodia, formal attention to gender equality began with the establishment of the Secretariat of State for Women's Affairs in 1993, replaced by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1996. This period coincided with global developments such as the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), which produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and promoted gender mainstreaming as a core principle in policy discourse. Scholars such as Tokita (2011) argue that these international discourses were instrumental in reshaping domestic perceptions of women in Cambodia, shifting the narrative from viewing women as socially disadvantaged individuals to recognizing them as valuable human resources with economic potential (p.66).

One notable manifestation of this policy orientation was the 1999 strategy document *Neary Rattanak* ("Women are Precious Gems"), which sought to reframe women's social value. The title metaphorically emphasizes women's latent potential as "gems," contrasting with traditional patriarchal proverbs such as "Men are gold; women are white

cloth". In the traditional metaphor, men are associated with gold, conveying durability, intrinsic worth, and lasting value, whereas women, likened to white cloth, are seen as vulnerable to contamination, with value contingent upon purity and honor. The *Neary Rattanak* discourse represents an attempt by the state to challenge such entrenched norms and to articulate a new vision of women as empowered and valuable agents in both social and economic spheres.

Despite these policy advances, it is important to recognize the limitations of state-led initiatives in fully transforming gendered social norms. The symbolic redefinition of women as "gems" does not automatically equate to recognition of women's autonomy or decision-making power over their own bodies and lives. State institutions, including the National Council of Women and the National Committee for the Protection of Social Norms, Women, and Khmer Family Values, continue to reinforce patriarchal expectations, regulating women's behavior and maintaining social order around idealized notions of femininity. Women who conform to these expectations are integrated into the national moral and social framework, while those who deviate may face marginalization or state oversight. This tension illustrates the partial nature of policy-driven empowerment and the persistence of gendered constraints within Cambodian society.

Against this backdrop, this study focuses on the domain of traditional performing arts, specifically the instruction of Khmer Classical Dance (*robam boran khmae*) at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, as a lens for examining the limitations of binary gender frameworks. In the context of classical dance education, the categorization of practitioners as either male or female proves insufficient to capture the complex ways in which gender is enacted, performed, and socially constructed. The study critically interrogates how the binary logic of "male versus female" obscures the fluidity of gender roles in both pedagogical practices and cultural transmission, emphasizing that educational and artistic processes often resist simplistic gendered classification.

By analyzing the transmission and performance of *robam boran khmae*, this study also addresses the broader phenomenon of the so-called "reverse gender gap," in which female educational attainment exceeds that of males in certain contexts. While Cambodia exhibits this trend to a lesser degree than some neighboring countries, the phenomenon nevertheless calls into question assumptions about women's educational disadvantage. Importantly, female achievement should not be measured solely by comparison with male peers; rather, it should be understood as part of a wider process in which gender itself is continuously negotiated, reconstructed, and enacted within specific cultural and institutional contexts.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the emerging discourse on gender in Southeast Asia by integrating socio-economic, cultural, historical, and policy perspectives. It challenges both the reductionist framing of women's educational disadvantage and the binary conceptualization of gender, proposing a more nuanced understanding of gender fluidity, agency, and empowerment. By situating the case of Cambodian higher education and classical dance within these broader analytical frameworks, the study offers insights into how educational attainment, cultural practice, and gender norms intersect, providing a more complex account of equality and social transformation in Southeast Asia.

Case of Malaysia: *Where Have All the Boys Gone?*: Re-examining Women's Participation in Malaysian Higher Education

KAMOGAWA Akiko

Generally speaking, the gender gap in education is understood as a problem of disparity between men and women in the sense that women have fewer educational opportunities and are placed in a disadvantageous situation. However, in the case of Malaysia, there is a ``reverse gender gap" phenomenon in which men have fewer educational opportunities than women in public universities. This research focuses on this "Reverse Gender Gap (RGG)" phenomenon in Malaysia. In particular, this research aims to clarify the question of why the reverse gender gap in higher education has become apparent since the early 2000s.

Regarding the fact that women are superior in terms of university entrance and men do not advance to higher educational levels, Prime Minister Mahathir (at the time of 2002) said, ``How can men want to go to university, and why do they not want to go to university? There is a need to elucidate this," he once worried (Utusan Malaysia 2002/8/26). This reverse phenomenon is called the "reverse gender gap" and has been addressed in research papers since the 2000s (Wan 2018). This word is also a word that has been used relatively recently in newspapers such as The New York Times (2011/12/13) (Kamogawa 2021, p.194). It is true that there was a gender gap in higher education in Malaysia until the early 2000s. Nevertheless, since the early 2000s, why has the gender gap in higher education changed to a reverse gender gap? Under this question, I will proceed with the argument from three perspectives.

The purpose of this study is to clarify the current situation and issues of women's higher education and "Lost Boys" issue in Malaysia from a gender perspective. For this purpose, we will (1) statistically organize the current state of women's higher educational attainment, (2) describe the background and factors behind women's higher educational attainment, and (3) the trends of the Malaysian-style "lost boys" will be examined. This Malaysian case study focuses on male students at polytechnics, which are public higher education institutions. Findings are presented based on literature review, policy analysis, statistical analysis, and field research conducted at polytechnics. The presentation structure is as follows.

First, I will attempt to elucidate the current status of the reverse gender gap phenomenon in public universities in Malaysia and the background and factors that cause this phenomenon. In this part, we will statistically organize the current state of women's higher educational attainment in comparison with other Southeast Asian countries.

Second, while referring to the GGGI (Global Gender Gap Index) published by the World Economic Forum, I will consider the positives and negatives of women's higher education seen in the multi-ethnic society of Malaysia. In doing so, we will also focus on the phenomenon of men's disengagement from education.

Third, we will present examples of how higher education and work-life careers are linked in various ways. As mentioned above, in this study, as a result of analyzing the results

of literature research, analysis of various statistical data and preliminary field research, we point out the issues that although women's educational attainment is increasing, it does not necessarily lead to women's active participation after graduating from university. On the other hand, we also discuss what alternative paths men who choose not to pursue university studies might select.

In conclusion, how can the RGG phenomenon be explained and interpreted in the context of Malaysia? As a result of the examination, the following three points were clarified.

First, an analysis of various statistical data from Malaysia confirms a phenomenon that can certainly be described as an increase in women's educational attainment. In addition, the tendency was conspicuous in public universities. On the other hand, from the perspective of university type, field of study, and degree level, there was a tendency for the ratio of male students to be higher than that of female students in vocational programs established in higher education institutions such as polytechnics and community colleges in Malaysia. In addition, the ratio of general high schools (academic courses) and vocational high schools (vocational and technical courses) in the upper secondary education stage is high in general high schools in Malaysia.

Second, a certain characteristic was observed in the discourse on the "women in development" policy promoted by the government and the multiple roles demanded of women. As mentioned above, women were always forced to make choices and were burdened with the conflict of playing multiple roles. However, education was recognized as a universal right that should be actively acquired, and as a result, women's higher educational attainment was promoted. This aspect is common across Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia and Indonesia(Kamogawa and Hattori, 2022).

Third, in Malaysia, women's higher education does not necessarily lead to higher rankings in the gender gap index. This was particularly noticeable in the political and economic aspects. This phenomenon requires further consideration, but there seems to be a problem in the contradiction of the message to women and in society as a recipient. Concurrently, through research at polytechnics, we can tentatively conclude that career development within Malaysia's public higher education institutions requires a multifaceted analysis encompassing not only gender factors but also socioeconomic factors.

Case of Malaysia: "Masculinity" as a Lens for Deciphering the Paradox of Malaysia's Reverse Gender Gap Phenomenon: "Lazy Boys" prejudice and the Colonial Gaze

KUSHIMOTO Hiroko

In Malaysia, the "Reverse Gender Gap (RGG)" phenomenon presents a contradiction: whilst women excel in educational attainment rates and academic performance, they cannot be said to be on equal footing with men in the labour market or in political and economic decision-making spheres.

This contradiction is not a simple problem to be resolved merely by increasing women's numerical presence in the latter domains. Rather, it can be seen as a manifestation of a more deeply rooted issue: the historically constructed gender relations and social structures. However, research on the RGG phenomenon has not focused on this process of historical construction.

This paper aims to demonstrate the potential for interpreting this contradiction between women's educational attainment and social status by connecting it to the historically formed structures of gender and power relations that have shaped Malaysian society, through a focus on 'masculinities'. Specifically, this paper addresses gender relations within the Malay community, which constitutes the majority in Malaysia. First, based on a review of existing literature and on fieldwork conducted in Malaysian universities, it identifies the existence of the stereotype 'Girls are hardworking' 'Boys are less' and the attitudes of current Malay male students in Malaysian universities. It will then draw on the concept of 'Multiple Masculinities' to demonstrate that the Malay masculinity described as ' not hardworking ' can be linked to the British colonial-era discourse of the 'lazy Malay'.

The issue of boys' educational underachievement, contrasting with the RGG phenomenon, has drawn global attention. UNESCO's report on Boys' Disengagement identifies "masculinity" as the primary factor, examining case studies within each region's unique context (UNESCO 2022). However, masculinity should not be viewed as something fixed within a particular region or culture; it must be understood as socially constructed and continuously reconstructed. Regarding the RGG in Malaysia, despite a reasonable number of studies on the RGG itself, no research has focused on the historical construction of gender and education underlying it, nor has any analysis using 'masculinity' as a keyword been observed.

What impact does women's success in education have on masculinity? How are women's socio-economic "limitations" defined by masculinity? The concept of "Multiple Masculinities", advocated by Connell and others, offers a crucial point of view when considering these issues: Within a single society, there exist multiple masculinities, and unequal power relations exist between them (Connell 206). This perspective of multiple masculinities is critically important when analysing non-Western societies, particularly those where educational systems were created through colonial rule. When attempting to situate the RGG phenomenon within its historical context, focusing on Malaysia, and particularly on Malay masculinity, the key lies in the 'Myth of the Lazy Malay' (Alatas 1977) created by Europeans, especially the British administrators who established the education system. This myth represents a hierarchy of 'incomplete masculinity' placed beneath European 'complete masculinity'.

This paper presents the concept of "Lazy Malay" as the key linking the contemporary RGG phenomenon to its historical construction. The first part of this paper uses data from prior research, observations made by the author whilst serving as a full-time lecturer at the International Islamic University Malaysia from 2014 to 2019, and interviews conducted with Malay students and staff at the International Islamic University Malaysia between 2022 and 2023. It clarifies how the stereotype that 'girls

are hardworking, boys are not' manifests. Many staff and students are aware of such stereotypes, and these biases do not manifest directly. However, contrasts such as 'girls meet deadlines and do their best' versus 'boys submit work of lower quality' are observable. A novel point emerging from the research suggests that differences in attitudes between male and female students may be seen less as differences between men and women, and more as differences in the attitudes of daughters and sons towards their parents, particularly their mothers. From this perspective, contrasts such as the "dutiful daughter" versus the "spoilt son" emerge, highlighting the significance of the relationship with female teachers in their role as "mothers".

Drawing on the above field data, the 'masculinities' that can be derived from these contrasts between female and male students are analysed, referencing the concept of Multiple Masculinities. The stereotype that "boys are lazy" was not only articulated by British men within Malaysia's historical context. As Alatas notes, it was subsequently repeated by elite Malay men during Malaysia's nation-building and development policies as a "masculinity to be overcome", becoming a standard phrase of Malay self-criticism (Alatas 1977). While Alatas analysed "Malay representations" without focusing on gender, studies on colonial-era girls' education reveal that British administrators shaped an image of "industrious girls" as contrasted with boys (Schauer 2017).

This reverse image of "lazy boys" and "industrious girls" represents evaluations linked to desirable attitudes towards labour within a capitalist economy – what might be termed a middle-class ethic – positioning women "above" men. However, the role expected of industrious girls in colonial education was to maintain the existing social order, which British anthropologists and others regarded as the "desirable Malay tradition" (Schauer 2017). Here, women are positioned "below" men. If this "twist" – female superiority in diligence coupled with male superiority in social order – lies at the root of the social structure embedded within the modern school education system introduced during the colonial period, might we not see a continuity with the "contradictions" observable in contemporary RGG?

Obviously, it is not possible to draw a direct line connecting the colonial situation with the present one. However, considering the fundamental continuity between the power structures of Multiple Masculinities shaped globally in the modern era, as Connell points out, and the structures of the colonial period, a link at a deep level of social structure can be discerned. it will be a future task to clarify, from a social-historical study of education, how this "twist" has been transformed over the course of building the educational system in post-independence Malaysia.

Case of Thailand: Exploring the Background and Factors Behind the Reverse Gender Gap in Higher Education in Thailand: An Analysis Based on Student Narratives

MORISHITA Minoru

The purpose of this presentation on the case of Thailand is to explore the background and factors of the reverse gender gap in Thai higher education to elucidate Thailand's

unique characteristics, and to clarify how students in Bangkok perceive this reverse gender gap through their narratives.

Higher education system in Thailand is somewhat complex, comprising diverse institutions. According to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), there are nine types of higher education institutions. Additionally, there are vocational colleges connected to upper secondary vocational education under the Ministry of Education, as well as institutions administered by other ministries. As of 2018, 1,792,665 students were enrolled across 171 institutions. The gross enrollment rate exceeded 50% (MHESI 2025). Reviewing recent higher education policy developments, the "20-Year Higher Education Long-Term Plan 2018-2037" was announced in 2018. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation was established in 2019, aiming to promote education and research in an integrated manner to advance Thai society and enhance competitiveness. However, this policy does not mention gender issues.

Examining various past government documents to explore when female dominance in higher education began reveals that enrollment levels between men and women roughly equalized around 1990, with women subsequently gaining the upper hand. According to the latest Statistical Yearbook Thailand 2024 (NSO 2024), the female ratio in bachelor's degree programs has now reached over 60%. The background to women increased educational attainment includes not only improvements in the education system but also the expansion of career choices accompanying economic development. Reviewing various prior studies on Thai studies suggests that Thai society has traditionally been one where it was common for women to work and support the household. The traditional view of women's roles is said to have been "being both mother and provider." (Hayami 2019) Furthermore, in traditional rural society, the youngest daughter would reside with her parents and take on the responsibility of caring for and supporting them, namely a system known as " matrilineal inheritance by the youngest daughter." With economic development, women increasingly came to believe that educational attainment was necessary to gain social status (Takeuchi 2015).

The "Marriage Equality Act," enacted on January 23, 2025, legalized same-sex marriage, providing clearer guarantees for LGBTQ+ rights in Thai society (Bangkok Post: January 23, 2025). While gender diversity has long been recognized, symbolized by terms like "katoey," recent social changes have seen a growing movement within Thailand to accept gender diversity (Huve, Poupart 2022).

The presenter visited four universities in Bangkok in September 2024 and conducted interviews with students and professors. This occurred just before the Marriage Equality Act was passed by the National Assembly. For this research, significant cooperation was received from Associate Professor Dr. Jessada Salathong of the Faculty of Communication and Arts at Chulalongkorn University, including introductions to the visited institutions and confirmation of points to note regarding Thai society during the interviews. The interview method employed semi-structured group discussions with 6 to 8 participants. Discussions were mainly conducted in Thai, with some supplementary use of English and Japanese. The questions covered: (1) Perceptions of RGG—how

interviewees felt about the phenomenon and what they believed its background and causes were; (2) Views on gender diversity—how they felt about RGG being discussed based on a male-female binary, and their thoughts on LGBTQ+ issues and diversity in gender identity.

At the beginning of the discussion, the presenter inquired about the gender composition within each targeted faculty. RGG was present in every faculty, with female ratios around 60-70%. Regarding LGBTQ+, awareness suggested a presence of approximately 20% to 40%. In one faculty, Boys Straight students account for only 5 percent. It was clear that LGBTQ+ students were becoming more visible and increasing their presence.

Regarding what motivates the pursuit of higher education by so many women, many described university as a "means to independence," citing the desire to support aging parents as a motivation. Simultaneously, female students expressed significantly less desire to marry. This is true for LGBTQ+ students as well; they attended university to gain the ability to live independently. In Thai society, possessing specialized knowledge, skills, or advanced abilities allows individuals to thrive regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Conversely, men were found to have a persistent belief that "there are jobs boys can do without a degree," resulting in weaker aspirations for higher education. Furthermore, it was thought that many male secondary school students dislike studying and tend to prefer gaming and motorcycles.

Furthermore, in response to the influence of SDG5 and the rise in human rights awareness, universities were seen as the starting point for achieving equality in gender diversity.

The presenter analyses gender disparity in Thai higher education through student narratives, revealing distinct motivations among men, women and LGBTQ+ individuals. Many male students believe that they can find work without a degree, particularly in fields such as the military, the police force, and monkhood. For those uninterested in academia, earning money and enjoying hobbies offers a satisfying alternative to university.

However, female students regard higher education as crucial for achieving independence, particularly to support ageing parents. This emphasis on independence is also evident among LGBTQ+ students, who pursue higher education to acquire specialized skills and flourish in society, regardless of their gender identity. Their motivations often align with those of women, suggesting that LGBTQ+ students may surpass straight men in terms of university participation.

Thailand’s binary gender registration system obscures this diversity. If straight men represent only 5–25% of students, the male-to-female ratio becomes meaningless. The 'reverse gender gap', where women outnumber men, may now be evolving into a scenario where LGBTQ+ students outnumber straight men.

Universities promote inclusion and align with the SDGs, offering freedom of dress and respect for LGBTQ+ students. Yet secondary schools remain strict, and Faculty of

Education often reject transgender students from teaching practice. This contradiction, where future educators are denied equal treatment, highlights a major institutional challenge in achieving gender equality.

范式冲突与价值重构：全球南方视角下跨境教育的"双轨"模式进路

(Mandarin/Putonghua)

Adela Juntian CHEN

长期以来，全球留学教育格局始终呈现以"全球北方"发达国家为中心的范式。在这种教育模式下，国际学生的流向主要由南方欠发达国家和地区趋向北方发达国家和地区，留学教育的报读类型也高度集中于高等教育领域。在北方主导的跨境教育范式下，全球留学生教育主要服务于东道国的人才战略。在高等教育人才培养领域，此类教育模式为原籍国带来了普遍性的人才流失现象；在技术型人才领域，仅有少数发达国家以吸纳移民为导向提供职业技术型留学，其教育目的也主要服务于本国的劳动力供给需求。 随着"全球南方"国家的群体性崛起，上述传统跨境教育范式正面临一种根本性的冲突——南方国家"本土发展主义"的新需求，与原有北方国家主导的"移民导向"留学培养模式形成了在适配性和实用性方面的差异。处于快速发展期的诸多南方国家不仅需要少数能引领学术和科技的精英，更迫切需要大量可服务于本国基础设施建设、工业升级和经济优化的职业技术型人才。这种对高等教育和职业教育人才的双重缺口，使得众多留学生在毕业后选择返回原籍国，并直接推动了留学生对学术与技术留学的价值评估。以回国发展的价值前景为驱动、在高等教育和职业教育中依据个人发展规划做出留学选择的新需求，正逐步取代传统模式下通过高等教育留学或技术移民型职业教育留学进入东道国移民劳务市场的单一逻辑。 当"南方力量"正逐步突破传统的留学教育格局，围绕全球留学教育的研究仍较多沿用原有"北方主导"的分析范式，并鲜少关注到这种基于留学生个体价值需求的"南方模式"。

本研究正是基于这样的背景，通过中国面向同为南方国家的老挝开展跨境教育实践的具体案例，对这种新需求下的"双轨"教育模式及其作用机理展开剖析。缘起于在中国边疆地区开展"跨境公共产品"的调研线索，作者观察到位于西南边疆地区的云南省将培养学术精英的高等教育和培养技术人才的职业教育视作两条并行路径，为邻国老挝地区留学生提供"双轨并行"的跨境教育选项。

这种基于"南南合作"的跨境教育模式打破了"北方主导"的留学教育特性：在教学层次上，既为留学生提供传统的"精英-学术"高等学历教育，又搭建了成规模的"技术-应用"职业教育体系；在专业设置上，既关注双边合作项目的发展需求，又对标留学生原籍国的本土建设需要。 这种"双轨"留学教育模式与"北方主导"模式的显著不同自然引出了本研究的核心问题：在全球留学教育转型的背景下，将高等和职业教育作为"价值平等"留学选项的全新范式，如何服务"全球南方"国家的宏观发展需求与留学生个体的微观价值选择？进而，这种来自"南南合作"框架的留学教育模式，正如何通过为全球南方区域提供符合本土发展需求人才的方式突破"北方主导"的传统留学教育范式？ "北方主导"下的传统留学模式具有"高等教育"为主的范式倾向，这并不适应于本研究中对于两种路径的平等比较；基于人才流失与人才流入的传统跨境教育分析进路，也无法适应"南南合作"所倡导的服务留学生原籍国社会发展的目标导向。

为此，为了客观公正评估两种留学教育对于留学生微观个人发展及其原籍国宏观社会发展需要的价值影响，本文结合布迪厄的"资本理论"中关于文化资本、社会资本和经济资本的原始划分，进一步构建"双重资本"的分析维度："文化-社会资本"源于布迪厄对文化资本和社会资本的论述，代表通过教育获得的长期性"声望价值"；"人力-经济资本"整合了以职业教育为代表的特定文化资本和布迪厄对于经济资本的论述，代表通过教育获得的短期回报性"实用价值"。本文将上述两类划分作为后续编码构建的依据，探讨以高等教育院校和职业教育机构如何分别侧重"两种资本"，这种偏向性又如何分别满足了来滇老挝留学生群体的两种价值需求。

本研究在实证部分采取以"理论驱动编码"为主导的混合定性内容分析法，分析材料来源包括云南招收老挝籍留学生 21 所高等院校和 12 所职业院校的官网新闻、中央和云南地方的官方主流媒体报道和云南省政府政策文件。我们将首先基于上述"双重资本"分析框架建立"理论驱动编码表"，对云南相关院校开展不同类别留学生教育的案例展开系统性"价值分析"。其次，为避免理论框架的局限性，我们将在编码过程中适当运用归纳式编码的方式提取材料中的其他相关信息补充，以作为对原始理论框架下核心分析的互证与补充。 初步研究结果表明，云南对老挝留学生的"双轨"教育模式清晰地反映了"双重资本"的逻辑分化：在高等教育院校案例中，"精英-学术"导向为留学生提供长周期精英教育、高声誉学位证书和校友人脉网络，促进"声望价值"的积累；在职业教育院校案例中，"技术-应用"导向为留学生提供了短周期专门职业技能、即时就业前景和高薪回报，促进"实用价值"的积累。前者塑造具有长期影响力的社会精英，后者培育精准适配老挝本土经济产业发展的技术专才，两种面向留学生的教育模式皆是符合南方国家发展需求和留学生个人职业价值选择的平等路径。

本研究以中国沿边地区省份云南为周边邻国老挝的留学生提供"双轨"教育的案例，为"南南合作"背景下全球教育范式的转变提供了一个典型的样本。在传统的"北方主导"跨境教育模式中，高等教育与职业技能教育的价值差异源自"文化-社会资本"被置于绝对优先地位、"人力-经济资本"被视为服务于北方国家劳动力市场次等工具的功能定位。这种传统模式下对两类教育模式的价值评定，系统性地忽视了全球南方国家本国发展所需的实际需求。这种核心分歧的本质是比较教育领域对"边缘需求"忽略，也是传统跨境教育范式对多元发展路径的包容缺失。

本文结合布迪厄资本理论构建的"双重资本"分析框架，将不仅解释来自南方国家的"双轨"模式如何平等兼顾高等教育和职业教育对发展中国家的多元化人才需求，更将为全球跨境教育研究提供一种新的价值视角：高等教育与职业教育在跨境教育中具有"平等价值"，倡导两种留学教育模式的"双轨并行"将推动留学教育资源的多样性与包容性，最终为化解全球跨境教育范式与全球南方国家发展实际之间的核心冲突提供学术支撑与实践参照。

高等教育高质量发展背景下的学生满意度反思——基于中美比较的视角

(Mandarin/Putonghua)
ZHANG Chen Yao & SU Qi Bang

作为衡量教育质量的重要指标，"学生满意度"概念自 20 世纪中叶在美国被提出以来，便在高等教育市场化与竞争加剧的背景下迅速发展，并逐渐成为全球范围内高等教育质量评价的常用工具。随着教育全球化的深入以及我国高等教育治理体系的完善，自 21 世纪初开始我国也引入了该评价维度，并在政策推动下，将其纳入本科教学质量报告、教育督导和质量保障体系之中。然而，作为一个植根于西方市场逻辑的外来概念，学生满意度在中国的应用过程中逐渐显现出适应性不足、数据失真、功利化倾向和功能异化等问题。

本文以中美比较为视角，在回顾学生满意度概念的发展脉络的基础上，对我国当前学生满意度研究和实践的逻辑困境进行了剖析，进而通过对中美制度逻辑、评价方式和文化习惯差异的分析，揭示中国学生满意度调查的本土特征，并结合高质量发展的时代背景提出制度与实践层面的改进路径。 追溯学生满意度的起源，这一概念最早产生于 20 世纪中叶的美国。当时，市场经济的扩张和高等教育的竞争压力使得大学开始借鉴商业领域的顾客满意度概念，用以测量学生对教育服务的感知体验，从而为学校改进教学质量提供数据支持。

自 20 世纪 60 年代起，美国及其他西方国家陆续展开了关于学生满意度的大规模调查与理论研究，形成了以学生为中心、市场逻辑为导向的质量评价体系。 而我国对学生满意度的研究则始于本世纪初，最初仅限于个别学校或课题组的探索性尝试。早期学者多以引介和借鉴美国经验为主，倡导建立以学生为中心的培养模式，并呼吁国家层面推动大规模、系统化的满意度调查。2010 年，《国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要（2010-2020）》首次将"学生和社会需求"纳入质量评价标准，标志着学生满意度进入国家政策视野。随后，教育部发布的本科教学评估与质量报告制度进一步确立了"学生学习满意度"在教育质量评价中的重要地位，从而推动了全国范围内的学生满意度调查实践。

伴随政策的推进，我国学术界在该领域的研究成果也逐渐丰富。总体上可分为三类：一是通过大规模调查了解大学生总体满意度现状，并据此提出改进建议；二是探讨影响学生满意度的因素，如教学质量、学习投入、师生关系等；三是尝试开发或修订适用于本土情境的测量模型与量表。然而，相较于实证研究的繁荣，对满意度概念本身进行理论反思与本土化分析的研究则稍显不足，少有专门针对我国的教育环境、对满意度调查的"中国特色"进行反思或对其本土适用性进行论证，而这些恰恰是学生满意度作为一个外来概念在我国应用于实践前所必须弄清楚的问题。 在理论研究尚存空缺的环境下，满意度调查的实施却如火如荼。

进入 21 世纪第二个十年，随着"以学生为中心"的理念被广泛倡导，学生满意度调查逐渐常态化，但实施过程中却出现了数据流于形式、反馈机制不完善等问题。例如，学生评教在实践中常常受到人情化因素干扰，教师与学生之间的互评关系异化为一种"高分互惠"的形式化行为，导致调查结果缺乏真实性和参考价值。这种现象既暴露出满意度调查在

实践中的局限，也反映了其背后逻辑尚未被充分厘清的现实困境，通过对学生满意度调查在我国实施的现实困境与内在逻辑进行系统梳理，本文将其归纳为三个核心问题。

第一是满意度的代表价值困境，即学生满意度能否真实反映学生需求。学生满意度调查的理论假设是通过收集学生的主观反馈来反映其真实需求和学习体验。然而，满意度作为一种心理感受，受主观期望与即时情绪影响较大，缺乏稳定性和专业性，难以全面反映教育成效。学生的短期满意度与其长期学习质量之间并不一定存在正向关系，主观感知往往会将“学习轻松”误认为“教学优质”，从而削弱调查的客观性。

第二是满意度的阈值限度困境，即学生满意度是不是越高越好。在实践中，高满意度往往被视为高质量的象征，形成了“满意度越高越好”的价值误区。然而研究表明，学生的高满意度并不一定意味着高质量教育。部分学生可能因课程要求宽松、评价宽容而产生“虚假满足”，反而容易削弱其学习投入与自主成长。

第三是满意度的校际比较困境，即学生满意度能否作为大学办学质量的比较指标。当前一些社会机构时常将满意度数据用于高校排名和竞争展示，但研究表明，不同高校间的满意度差异缺乏显著区分度，无法有效反映教育质量的真实差别。这种以横向比较为导向的使用方式，容易导致高校过度迎合学生、追求表面分数，从而偏离教育本质。

为何学生满意度概念在引入我国后出现了诸多不适应问题呢，笔者认为，要真正理解这些问题并提出改进思路，就必须将学生满意度调查置于具体的制度与文化环境中加以考察，即需要通过中美比较的视角切入进行理解。这不仅有助于揭示学生满意度调查在中国实践过程中所呈现的特殊性，也为我们思考如何在高质量发展阶段实现这一指标的本土化转化与有效运用提供了重要参照。 中美差异首先体现在学生满意度的制度定位上，即学生是不是消费者。美国的高等教育市场化程度较高，“学生客户模型”（student-as-customer）在研究与实践中被普遍采用，因此学生也往往被视为教育服务的消费者，满意度则代表其对教育产品的评价。

而在中国，高等教育被明确界定为公共事业，教育必须服务国家发展和社会需要，学生并非市场意义上的“顾客”，而是公共服务对象。我国教育政策的核心目标是“办人民满意的教育”，因此满意度调查的功能更多是反映公共服务质量，而非市场竞争力。 其次是学生满意度的评价逻辑差异，这一调查实施的背后是由市场主导还是政府主导的。美国的满意度调查多由独立第三方机构开展，采用契约型模式，强调院校自愿与市场竞争。而中国的调查则以政府主导为主，行政部门通过政策性文件规定高校必须纳入满意度指标，并上报结果。这种行政化机制虽保证了权威性与覆盖面，但也导致高校在执行中出现形式化、同质化现象，甚至削弱了院校的自主改进动力。

最后是中美两国的文化习惯差异，一方习惯真实直接，另一方则倾向含蓄内敛。在美国的个人主义与契约文化中，学生倾向于直接表达真实意见，将满意度视为权利监督工具；而在中国的集体主义与“面子文化”背景下，学生更注重关系维护与情感和谐，评价时往往出于礼貌或敬畏心理给出高分。这种文化差异导致相同的量表在中美语境下的测量维度并不相同，也使得我国满意度结果普遍偏高、区分度不足。 通过上述分析可以看到，

如何在高质量发展阶段更好地利用学生满意度指标，既避免照搬西方经验引发的不适配问题，又充分发挥其在教育治理和质量改进中的积极作用，成为必须回答的现实课题。

为此，本研究结合我国高等教育高质量发展的要求，认为学生满意度调查应从制度、边界、功能与机制四个方面进行重构。 首先需要重构制度定位。应明确学生满意度作为公共服务反馈工具的功能，而非消费体验指标。高校要从"迎合"学生转向"回应"学生需求，在调查设计上从"体验导向"转向"发展导向"，关注学生的学习投入、能力成长和获得感。同时，应建立调查结果的闭环改进机制，将满意度数据与课程改革、教师培训、学习支持体系等环节结合，使其成为持续改进的依据。 其实需要界定合理边界。高校需防止满意度被绝对化，应认识到高满意度并不必然代表高质量。教育目标不仅在于让学生感到满意，更在于激发潜能与塑造品质。学校应将满意度结果与学习成效、学业投入等客观指标结合使用，在挑战与支持之间形成平衡，构建多元化、理性化的质量评价体系。 再次是防止满意度功能异化。应避免满意度被滥用于校际排名与社会竞争。教育主管部门与媒体机构不宜将满意度作为高校声誉或问责依据，而应引导其回归院校内部改进逻辑。学校应以问题导向使用满意度结果，针对反馈中反映出的教学不足及时调整，形成自我诊断与改进的良性循环。

最后是推动满意度调查本土化与专业化重构。中国的满意度调查应在本土化与专业化的结合中寻求发展。一方面，应建立独立或半独立的调查平台，提升科学性与公信力；另一方面，要考虑文化因素的影响，避免简单照搬西方量表，而应引入开放性问题和分层调查，增强数据的真实性与解释力。同时，应将满意度调查嵌入高校质量保障体系的长效机制，与年度报告、专业认证等工作联动，以实现持续性改进。

Navigating Global Citizenship Education: contextual influences and orientations

HUI Emily Sein Yue Elim & YANG Min

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a complex, multifaceted concept with no consensus on its definitions and practices. This study investigates the diverse orientations and implementations of GCE across various contexts, particularly in the context of de-globalisation. An analysis of 155 articles from the SSCI database, published between 2006 and 2023, focuses on GCE implementation in K-12 education. The practical application of GCE is influenced by multiple contextual layers, including geopolitics, national policies, curricula, and school environments. These layers frame GCE within various orientations, often serving political purposes. Under de-globalisation, GCE risks becoming abstract and detached from practical realities, with its operations potentially redefined as tools for cultivating political or cultural capital. The selective application of GCE orientations varies even within similar contexts, leading to its embodiment of multiple meanings as global cultural capital. The study emphasizes the need for researchers to acknowledge the influences and orientations shaped by contextual layers before comparing GCE practices across different settings. The inherent power tensions within these contextual layers significantly affect GCE's implementation and significance.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a multifaceted concept lacking consensus on its meanings and practices. This disagreement arises from variations in orientation and

implementation across different contexts, alongside a decline in global collaboration on critical issues like climate change. This trend, intertwined with decolonialism, pushes the discussion of GCE toward decolonial ends(Bonifai et al., 2022). While scholars like Oxley & Morris (2013) and (Pashby & Costa, 2021) have advanced GCE frameworks, significant gaps remain in linking theory to practice, especially local contexts play a crucial role in implementing GCE using the "soft" approach (Davies, 2006). This research aims to explore how GCE models connect with contexts, highlighting the essential role of local contexts in operationalizing GCE effectively.

Conceptual Framework

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a vital process aimed at developing students' identities, attitudes, knowledge, and skills for meaningful engagement in a globalized world. GCE encompasses various orientations that shape its implementation. The liberal orientation emphasizes rights, participation, and inclusion, fostering respect and intercultural understanding among students. This perspective encourages the embrace of shared values and the questioning of societal norms (Waghid, 2023). Conversely, the critical orientation focuses on power dynamics, urging students to confront inequalities and promote marginalized voices (Stein, 2015). The neoliberal orientation prepares students for economic engagement but often overlooks non-economic dimensions (Stein, 2015). In contrast, the neoconservative orientation emphasizes national interests, risking the assimilation of marginalized groups (Pashby & Sund, 2020). The GCE models lie on several orientations, or solely a single one that articulate which identities and knowledge should be prioritized and how this cultivation should occur. However, the cartography of orientations remain theoretical, while GCE practices write a different story in the local contexts. This study would like to review, synthesise and compare the power of contexts in shaping GCE studies.

Methods

This review study built upon Davies's (2006) soft approach to explore the theoretical and practical implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) since 2006, aiming to connect this discourse with GCE orientations outlined in Pashby's cartography (2021). The study established specific inclusion criteria. Literature is sourced from the SSCI database (i.e. Google Scholar, Scopus database), including journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, and conference proceedings. Articles must feature "global citizenship education" and "school" in titles, abstracts, or keywords, and the review will cover publications from January 1, 2006, to December 31, 2023. The focus was on K-12 contexts, excluding studies related to tertiary education.The initial screening evaluated 256 studies, with the aim of selecting approximately 155 articles for analysis.

Findings

The analysis of the literature reveals that GCE contexts from 47 countries were examined, with significant focus on the United States (N=13), the United Kingdom (N=11), and China (N=9). While academic orientations provide frameworks for understanding Global Citizenship Education (GCE), their real-world application is shaped by a few contextual layers, including geopolitics, national policies, curricula, and school contexts. These contextual layers—from geopolitical contexts to school environments—position GCE within various orientations, often serving political ends. In the Global North, educators

often adopt a critical orientation, challenging Western notions of identity and uncovering marginalized non-Western perspectives (Pashby & Costa, 2021). Conversely, GCE in the Global South emphasizes building student confidence and agency, promoting active engagement in global issues (Howard & Maxwell, 2023). Country policies play a crucial role in shaping GCE, with many nations aligning their frameworks with liberal ideals that focus on social transformation through values and soft skills (Davis, 2006). Implementation varies widely; for example, Costa Rica integrates GCE explicitly into its educational framework, while countries like the UK and France reference globalization more vaguely. In regions lacking explicit GCE policies, schools often create their own approaches. Most GCE programs are found in privately funded institutions, primarily accessible to middle-class students (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021), while some public schools incorporate GCE as supplementary learning, linking it to social mobility and cultural capital.

Discussion
Geopolitical power dynamics influence regional trends in global engagement, with national policies defining how GCE is integrated into education. In instances where GCE is not explicitly included in educational frameworks, schools become the final arbiters in determining their purposes and approaches to GCE. This flexibility allows schools to adapt GCE orientations to their unique contexts, reshaping GCE practices accordingly. While Davies' soft approach (2006) offers a liberal and transformative perspective, it risks becoming abstract and disconnected from practical realities, while its practical operations also risk being altered into means of cultivating political or cultural capital.

Significance
While the decolonial trend continues to emerge, a form of global engagement—particularly cosmopolitan engagement—may still align with global market agendas (Agartan & Hartwiger, 2021). Consequently, academic discussions surrounding GCE will persist, both academically and practically, as local contexts play a crucial role in shaping and redefining its contours. It is vital to recognize that power tensions exist within the contextual layers, including geopolitical dynamics, national and local cosmopolitan nationalism, and educational policies. These layers influence how GCE orientations are selectively applied, often differ even within the same context. This complexity results in GCE embodying multiple orientations across different contextual layers, gaining symbolic meanings sociologically as global cultural capital. This cultural capital may serve as a bargaining chip in future global engagements, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of GCE's role and implications in various contexts.

From Conflict to Confluence: Negotiating Global and Local Agendas in Taiwan's Higher Education Reform for Glocal Sustainability
LIU Jing

Background
In comparative education, disagreement is not only inevitable but also productive—it reveals differences in worldviews, positionalities, and epistemologies. In the contemporary global age, the field faces renewed tensions between universalist and contextual approaches, between competition and cooperation, and between global

excellence and local responsibility. These tensions are vividly manifested in higher-education systems attempting to internationalize while responding to local social and economic crises. Following Marginson's (2022) glonacal agency heuristic, universities act simultaneously within global, national, and local arenas. "Conflict" between these levels can foster innovation when institutions reinterpret global trends through local values. In many parts of Asia, the expansion of higher education is accompanied by two seemingly opposing imperatives: to internationalize for global competitiveness and to revitalize regions for social sustainability. Similar to the neighbors in the East Asia, Taiwan faces rapid population aging, rural depopulation, and uneven development, while also seeking global competitiveness. To address these challenges, they have advanced a series of overlapping policies—the Bilingual Nation 2030 Blueprint, New Southbound Policy (NSP), Higher Education Sprout Project (HESP), and University Social Responsibility (USR) program. Each policy promotes a different logic: economic globalization, linguistic competitiveness, egalitarian reform, and local sustainability. Together they generate both synergy and strain for universities navigating multiple, sometimes contradictory, expectations. Moreover, these agendas have generated multiple conflicts, such as conflicts between global competitiveness and local equity, conflicts between English-medium instruction and multilingual culture in Taiwan, and conflicts between research excellence and community engagement.

Research purpose and Research questions
Rather than viewing conflict as failure, this study holds a stance of treating conflict as epistemic dialogue—an arena where differing rationalities (market vs. public good, global vs. local) encounter and reshape one another.

This study aims at exploring how local universities in Taiwan interpret and negotiate these conflicts. It has the following research questions: 1. How do universities reconcile the tension between internationalization and regional revitalization? 2. In what ways does conflict become a creative force for institutional transformation? 3. What can these experiences contribute to comparative education's understanding of disagreement as a mode of learning? Methodology This study employs a qualitative comparative case study design. It draws from the authors' fieldwork (2022–2023) at two national universities participating in Taiwan's USR program, complemented by document analysis of government policies (Bilingual 2030 Blueprint, NSP, HESP) and institutional plans.

Case Selection:
Five universities with international components in their USR projects were surveyed; two were chosen for in-depth study because they had concrete strategies linking internationalization and regional revitalization.
• University A – a comprehensive university in central Taiwan (Shui-Sha-Lian region), oriented toward civic engagement, bilingual education, and Southeast Asian partnerships.
• University B – a national university of science and technology in southern Taiwan, formed by a 2018 merger, emphasizing technical innovation, sustainable aquaculture, and regional industry collaboration.

Data Collection:
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight interviewees, including senior administrators, international-office directors, and USR project leaders from both universities. Interviews explored institutional visions, implementation processes, and perceived conflicts between international and local mandates. Additional data were gathered from policy documents, institutional reports, and field observations.

Analysis:
Interview transcripts and documents were coded thematically, focusing on (a) strategic framing of internationalization, (b) forms of local engagement, (c) interactions between the two agendas, and (d) perceived tensions. Comparative analysis highlighted convergences and divergences in institutional logic.

Findings:
Divergent Approaches to Internationalization
Both universities align with national agendas but interpret them differently. University A adopts a holistic view: internationalization is interwoven with community engagement and sustainability. It established a Bilingual Education Support Center and the Shui-Sha-Lian Academy to integrate English-medium instruction with local fieldwork and Southeast-Asian exchange. University B, by contrast, focuses on global competitiveness through technical excellence—expanding EMI courses, postgraduate recruitment, and joint research in science and engineering fields. As one administrator reflected, "Our teachers can teach in English, but students struggle to follow." This gap highlights not only linguistic but epistemic disparities between policy aspiration and classroom reality.

Local Revitalization as Educational Core
Both universities embed regional revitalization into their educational design. University A follows an education-for-community-development model, with a three-tier curriculum that connects students directly with agricultural, environmental, and caregiving sectors. University B implements an innovation-for-sustainability model through its flagship "Ask the Neighbor Fisherman Build-Out Project," combining aquaculture science, food safety, and circular-economy design. Both models reveal how universities translate national mandates into context-sensitive pedagogy.

Integration through Transnational Collaboration
Despite disciplinary and regional differences, both institutions cultivate transnational alliances. University A collaborates with Kochi University (Japan) and Chiang Mai University (Thailand) on rural sustainability and coffee-industry revitalization. University B partners with Japanese universities for co-teaching, SDG workshops, and comparative research on sustainable aquaculture. Such initiatives exemplify glocal learning: cross-border exchange rooted in community practice rather than elite competition.

Conflict as Productive Tension
Conflict becomes a productive dialogue rather than a zero-sum struggle. This resonates with de Wit and Jones (2022), who advocate re-imagining internationalization as a cooperative rather than competitive paradigm. Both universities confront frictions—between EMI policy and multilingual realities, between short-term projects and long-

term partnerships, between research metrics and community service. Yet these conflicts stimulate organizational learning. University A's integration of internationalization committees across departments institutionalizes deliberation, while University B's post-merger uncertainty has encouraged interdisciplinary experimentation. Conflict thus operates as a creative engine that propels universities toward reflective, participatory forms of internationalization.

Comparative Implications
The findings show two paradigms of glocalization. University A, as a Civic-education model, rooted in humanities and social sciences, emphasizing mutual learning, bilingual education, and local governance. While University B, as a Technical-innovation model, anchored in STEM fields, emphasizing applied research, circular economy, and transnational cooperation. These demonstrate that non-elite, regionally based universities can contribute to global dialogues on higher-education reform, challenging the dominance of the "world-class university" narrative. By engaging both international and local communities, they redefine success not by ranking but by relevance and reciprocity.

Conclusion and Implications
Conflict and comparison are not opposites but intertwined processes in higher-education policy implementation in Taiwan. The juxtaposition of internationalization and regional revitalization reveals a deeper negotiation of values: global competitiveness versus public good, mobility versus rootedness, English dominance versus linguistic pluralism. Moreover, research findings show that these can generate institutional creativity, leading to more contextually grounded, socially responsive forms of university development. To be more specific, the findings indicate conflict as constructive dialogue-institutional disagreement fosters self-definition and innovation. Moreover, they enable us to consider local universities as global agents – when embedded in communities, universities bridge national and transnational arenas. In addition, they allow us to consider comparative education as reflexive practice – recognizing disagreement as constitutive of knowledge invites pluralism and mutual learning. This case study illustrates how higher education can move from conflict to confluence: transforming tension between global and local agendas into negotiation, creativity, and shared responsibility.

Integrating or Clashing Knowledges? A Teacher's Sharing and Reflection of Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Teaching and Learning
TSUI Gordon

This presentation discusses teachers' roles in undergraduate interdisciplinary courses within higher education. It starts by examining the growing importance and challenges of interdisciplinary courses, highlighting issues faced by students and educators. Then, the presentation conceptualizes teachers' roles through a review of relevant literature. Drawing from practical teaching experiences, the presenters analyze how students' (1) academic backgrounds and (2) socio-cultural diversity impact interdisciplinary engagement, revealing both opportunities and challenges, including disciplinary biases and cultural clashes. Following this, the presenters introduce a recently launched research project aimed at investigating these dynamics further, offering insights into

how teachers can better manage diversity and foster effective interdisciplinary learning. Concluding reflections underscore the reciprocal nature of teacher and student learning, proposing future directions for curriculum development and pedagogical strategies. This presentation will foster a dialogue with attendees interested in enhancing interdisciplinary teaching in higher education. Each part is further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Part One: The Growing Importance of Higher Education Interdisciplinary Courses and Its Challenges to Teachers

Interdisciplinarity, which emphasizes holistic learning and learning from each other, is of growing importance in higher education institutes globally. However, having more than one way of academic belief or one way of seeing things (as a discipline) within one course, interdisciplinary learning, compared to traditional disciplinary learning, can be a venue where different knowledges meet. Students without sufficient exposure to knowledges from other disciplines may experience a shock in the learning process. In addition, without proper and sufficient interdisciplinary learning experience or relevant teaching training in the past, teachers, in interdisciplinary courses, may have difficulties handling such courses, which may then have created unwanted or unforeseeable issues in the teaching process. This situation has led to the following question: What teaching philosophy or practice can teachers carry out to maximize students' interdisciplinary learning? This question will be discussed by the presenters' (a coordinator and a tutor) sharing and reflection based on their current interdisciplinary course and interdisciplinary project at their university.

Part Two: Conceptualizing Teachers' Roles in Interdisciplinary Courses

The part examines the definitions of "discipline", "inter-discipline" and how students are impacted when they face multiple disciplines in an interdisciplinary course. Focusing on the teachers' perspective, this part next reviews teachers' abilities in (1) curriculum design, (2) teaching pedagogy, (3) classroom management and (4) course assessment in interdisciplinary courses. The review has then shown that (1) interdisciplinary courses seem to be a "combination of everything" and (2) interdisciplinary course teachers seem to be omnipotent in curriculum, teaching, students' learning etc. However, given the limited space and time in each interdisciplinary course, what could, or should, teachers particularly focus on to maximize students' interdisciplinary learning?

Part Three: Interdisciplinary Teaching Experience Sharing and Reflection

The presenters then address the above question by sharing their experience in one interdisciplinary course (this interdisciplinary course mainly focuses on how students make use of their social and ethical values to critically evaluate and reach informed decisions on Socio-scientific Issues (SSI)). In the course, the two presenters have found out that students' (1) academic and (2) socio-cultural background influence the quality of interdisciplinary learning. Specifically,

(1) Academically, this aspect could be a "double-edged sword" that students from scientific disciplines tend to pay more attention to the scientific side (same for the students from social disciplines who tend to pay more attention to the social side). Both

groups tend to perform with a lower level of interdisciplinarity than students from neither scientific nor social disciplines in this course.

(2) Socio-culturally, students from various backgrounds contribute different types of evidence in class discussions, reflecting their unique socio-cultural perspectives and understanding. It seems highly inter-socio-cultural in this course, but the presenters (teachers) have then found out clashes of viewpoints among students due to socio-cultural differences are not uncommon. This has made some students from certain socio-cultural backgrounds less engaged in this course.

An example of a clash of viewpoints is shared in this part to illustrate how the above two factors impact the level of interdisciplinary learning in this course.

Part Four: A Research Project Regarding Interdisciplinary Courses, Teaching and Learning

The presenters' sharing and reflections have raised two key questions: (1) how students' academic and socio-cultural backgrounds influence the integration or clash of knowledges, and how this impacts their learning; and (2) how teachers could effectively manage such academic diversity and address potential clashes in socio-cultural values within an interdisciplinary course. To address the above questions, this qualitative and exploratory research aims to

(1) investigate how students' academic and socio-cultural background impact their learning in this interdisciplinary course.

(2) investigate how students' own academic background could be a "double-edged sword" in taking this course.

(3) provide insights on the teaching staff to revisit their course design to maximize students' learning from different academic and socio-cultural backgrounds to make the course more interdisciplinary.

(4) develop recommendations or guidelines for future students enrolling in this course or similar courses, and

(5) provide references and insights for other similar courses in higher education to support their interdisciplinary development in the future

Other research details such as research methodology, data collection, ethical concerns and timeline will be further explained in this part.

Part Five: Conclusion and Future Directions

This presentation has shown how students' (1) academic and (2) socio-cultural background could impact students' learning in an (undergraduate) interdisciplinary course. The presenters (teachers) reflect that they have, in fact, as much to learn from students' academic and socio-cultural knowledge as the students do from the teachers or course content. Before delving deeper into the roles of teachers in higher education interdisciplinary courses, the presenters conclude that, in these courses, teachers (presenters) are also learners, just as students are.

In the future, this topic will place greater emphasis on how teachers deal with students' academic and socio-cultural influences in interdisciplinary courses and how they prepare their curriculum, teaching methods, assessment, and other related aspects accordingly.

It is hoped that this presentation could provide some insights to both the teaching and research perspectives of higher education interdisciplinary courses. Attendees are welcome to share their experiences of teaching similar courses (either higher education or other levels of study) after the presentation to discuss this issue from a comparative perspective.

Mother Tongue Education for South Asian Languages in Singapore: Policies, Implementation, and Challenges

YAMATO Yoko

Singapore's bilingual education policy designates English as the primary language for all students, alongside a Mother Tongue Language (MTL) associated with each ethnic group. Mandarin Chinese for Chinese, Malay for Malays, and Tamil for Indians are integrated into the formal school curriculum. However, it is not well known that five other South Asian languages—Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Urdu—are recognized as MTLs for Indian communities but are primarily taught through community-based programs rather than regular school hours. This study examines the implementation of these languages, focusing on curriculum design, teaching practices, instructional materials, and the challenges of maintaining educational quality. Data were collected through interviews with community leaders and language instructors, a review of syllabi, and an analysis of teaching materials. Findings reveal that the Board for the Teaching and Testing of South Asian Languages (BTTSAL) plays a central role in standardizing content and quality across languages. At the same time, weekend classes provide the primary instruction. Issues such as limited weekly hours, parental involvement, and the need for teacher training highlight the complexities of delivering equitable MTL education. The study highlights the tension between policy recognition of linguistic diversity and the practical realities of effective language instruction, offering valuable insights for policymakers and educators in other places facing similar challenges in maintaining diverse ethnic languages in mainstream school education.

Characteristics of the Education System

At its founding, Singapore faced challenges such as inter-ethnic tensions and educational disparities. However, in recent years, it has consistently ranked highly in international academic assessments such as TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), establishing its status as a nation built on education. Compulsory education was legislated in 2003, though it is formally limited to six years of primary education. However, the government effectively guarantees ten years of education (MOE, 2024). The education system has traditionally employed a pathway-diversion model based on results from the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), taken upon completion of six years of primary education. Traditionally, the core of the system was a "tracking system" for secondary education, typically spanning four years. However, some students required five or more years, depending on their learning pace. This was followed by two years at a college or polytechnic before progressing to higher education. The PSLE comprises four subjects: English, Mother Tongue Language (MTL), Mathematics, and Science, and is a highly significant national examination. Subsequent education pathways connected to higher education via the O-Level examinations (based on the UK's General Certificate of

Education) and A-Level examinations (some are Singapore-specific papers). However, depending on PSLE results, there were diverse pathways: courses allowing direct entry to A-Levels without O-Levels, courses via N-Levels, and even pre-vocational courses.

Language Policy

The designation of MTL as a second language alongside Standard Chinese, Malay, and Tamil stemmed from a policy decision made by founding father Lee Kuan Yew, aimed at fostering unity within ethnic groups during nation-building (Lee, 2012). The Indian community comprised immigrants from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, along with their descendants, representing diverse backgrounds including religion, region, language, caste, and class. Linguistically, it was also significantly divided between northern and southern dialects (Rai, 2004). The British colonial government, which ruled the Malay Peninsula including Singapore, employed South Indians as plantation labourers and placed North Indians as free immigrants in non-labour sectors such as commerce and trade. This colonial-era labour allocation, based on racial attributes, is noted to have influenced the formation of the north-south divide and a hierarchical structure (Rai, 2004). According to Rai, this divisional structure, shaped by colonial policy, persisted even after independence from the Malayan Federation and during nation-building. Regarding the Indian community, which constituted only around 9% of the population, Tamil, a language predominantly spoken by South Indians, was designated as the sole MTL, despite significant linguistic differences between the north and south. Consequently, communities of North Indian origin and non-Tamil-speaking groups lobbied the government. In 1990, five languages —Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu — were newly recognised as MTLs, becoming options alongside Tamil for the Indian community (Jain & Wee, 2019). Thus, Indian languages gained six options. However, it is important to note that, while Tamil is institutionally recognised as an official language, the other five languages remain merely options within the MTL subject. There are two reasons for approving 5 Indian languages. Firstly, they all possess independent linguistic systems and distinct scripts, meaning they are not merely dialects. Secondly, the basis for recognition was that these Indian languages are established as subjects within the UK's General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination system, thereby demonstrating internationally established standards for these languages. Based on the above two reasons, in addition to Tamil, an official language, five languages—Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu—have been recognised as MTLs (Yamato, 2023). Furthermore, the 2022 field survey revealed that Indian languages other than Tamil are primarily taught through community-based initiatives rather than through the school education system.

1. Research Objectives

Thus, in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), Mother Tongue Language (MTL) is one of the four subjects, alongside English, Mathematics, and Science. However, the fact that some of the Indian languages are taught not through the formal school curriculum but on a community basis is noteworthy. This inevitably raises the question: how are the content of the curriculum, the standard of teaching, and the quality of education itself guaranteed for these subjects, compared to Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, which are systematically taught within schools? All four subjects in the PSLE are so important, and the total value determines the educational pathway after primary

education. Therefore, ensuring fairness in MTL is indispensable within the system's design. Consequently, the syllabus, examination content, and marking criteria for Indian languages must be designed to the same standard as those for Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, which are incorporated into school education as official languages. Furthermore, within Singapore's education system, it is widely acknowledged that 'the key to educational success lies in high-quality teachers' (Han, Le & Brent, 2024, p. 288). Teacher training is centralised under the National Institute of Education (NIE). A rigorous system is established post-recruitment, with developmental training offered and job performance evaluated at each stage. Against this backdrop, how the institutional foundation for teacher training concerning Indian languages other than the official languages is constructed, and how the quality of education is assured, constitutes a critical research topic. Specifically, ensuring coherence between community-based education conducted outside the school system and the state-led formal curriculum is a key issue within Singapore's language education policy. The objective of this study is to address this issue.

2-1. Establishment and Role of BTTSAL

While each of the five Indian language communities maintains its own independent organisation, the Board for the Teaching and Testing of South Asian Languages (BTTSAL) was established in 2002 under the Ministry of Education. Although BTTSAL is a loose collaborative body, its significant role lies in its unified promotion of the development of teaching materials for MTL subjects across all languages. Specifically, using Malay-language materials as a foundation, each language community undertakes translation and proofreading, with mutual verification within BTTSAL to ensure content and standards are homogeneous. Consequently, textbooks, teaching materials, and supplementary resources for each language are published as standardized materials on the official BTTSAL website. These BTTSAL-produced and sold materials serve as the official curriculum, rather than commercially available resources. Furthermore, the use of commercially available dictionaries recommended by BTTSAL is also encouraged. Furthermore, communities exist that conduct training activities, primarily through language schools, with information exchange facilitated via BTTSAL. It should be noted that all five North Indian languages belong to the Indo-Aryan branch and are derived from Sanskrit. It is noted that a certain degree of mutual intelligibility is possible among those who have studied Sanskrit (Bengali C).

2-2. Course Format and Availability

Classes are primarily held for four hours on Saturday mornings, utilising borrowed school classrooms. However, there are significant differences in the number of schools offering courses by language. Urdu, Gujarati, and Punjabi are offered at only one school each. Among these, Punjabi is also offered during regular school hours at one junior college. Conversely, Bengali is offered at four schools, and Hindi at seventeen. Hindi is additionally taught during regular school hours at primary and secondary schools (as detailed later). The Bengali and Hindi communities are centred on language schools rather than community organisations. Two schools each are registered with BTTSAL, which dispatches instructors to the Saturday classes held at designated schools. It should be noted that while the official languages—Chinese, Malay, and Tamil—can be studied during regular school hours as a school subject, students opting for other Indian

languages are permitted to use that time for self-study or to complete assignments for Saturday classes.

2-3. The Relationship between MTL and Moral Education

Within the curriculum, it is confirmed that moral education at the primary level is delivered through MTL (Ministry of Education, 2025; NIE, 2022 interview). The moral education subject, Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), is taught using the Malay-language textbook "Pendidikan Perwatakan & Kewarganegaraan", the Chinese-language textbook "品格与公民教育", the Tamil version 'நற்பண்பு குடியியல் கல்வி', and the English version "Character and Citizenship Education", which are commercially available in bookshops before the start of the school year. Among these, students studying Chinese, Malay, or Tamil learn CCE in their respective languages during primary school. Conversely, students opting for other Indian languages study CCE in English. Thus, MTL serves not merely as a language subject but also as the medium for learning moral education (CCE). In the nation's early years, amid challenges of ethnic integration, the founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, determined that character education delivered through each ethnic group's native language would effectively cultivate etiquette and foster national consciousness (Lee, 2012).

2-4. Curriculum, Unified Examinations, and MTL Levels

Curricula for Indian languages other than Tamil are translated from the Malay version, ensuring uniformity in MTL content and standards (Punjabi C). For the three official languages, alongside the standard syllabus covered in the PSLE examinations, an advanced syllabus covering more sophisticated content and a foundation syllabus for pupils with learning difficulties are provided. For the five Indian languages, however, only the standard curriculum is offered. The PSLE is based on the standard curriculum, but students who complete the advanced curriculum have this explicitly noted on their PSLE certificate. Students who complete the advanced curriculum are exempt from studying MTL (GCE A-level) at junior college, the pre-university stage, allowing them to focus on other examination subjects (Lim & Chow, 2023). At the secondary education level, students are streamed into five distinct levels, including the advanced stream, with tailored curricula provided (2022, Survey). Conversely, pupils who selected an Indian language other than the official languages as their MTL at the primary level are obliged to continue studying the standard curriculum at the same level up to the A-level stage, even if they encounter learning difficulties.

2-5. Fairness and Quality Assurance for Official Languages and Recognised MTLs

For MTLs in official languages, a system is established whereby regular teachers undergo teacher training programmes and professional development at the National Institute of Education (NIE). Conversely, teacher education and training for MTLs in Indian languages other than the official languages is delegated to the Bureau of Training and Teaching of South Asian Languages (BTTSAL) and respective communities, necessitating self-directed professional development by teachers themselves (Bengali C). Interviews revealed that being a native speaker does not automatically guarantee teaching ability, and challenges exist within the teacher education and training system (Gujarati C). MTLs other than the official language are taught for four hours weekly on Saturdays, using

classrooms borrowed from BTTSAL-registered primary and secondary schools. Pupils must attend the designated school, which is not necessarily near their home. For younger pupils, this often requires parental transport, placing a burden on families. Hindi enrolment is increasing annually, with more lessons now integrated into regular school timetables. By 2025, Hindi classes were offered in 33 primary schools and 26 secondary schools. Some schools have restricted new enrolments due to rising demand (Hindi-society.com, 2025). However, as Hindi is also a non-official language, MTL teachers are dispatched externally, resulting in higher costs compared to BTTSAL-administered weekend classes (Hindi C). Note that MTLs of official languages are provided as part of the regular school curriculum, incurring no additional fees. Singapore's national school tuition fees are the lowest, with citizens paying virtually nothing, followed by Permanent Residents (PRs), ASEAN nationals, and other foreign nationals. Choosing any other Indian language incurs separate tuition fees, even for Singaporean citizens. The paper continues with four more findings as follows:

2-6. Continuity of MTL Selection and Learning Challenges
2-7. Intentions and Reasons Concerning MTL Language Selection
2-8. The Political and Social Context of the Five Indian Languages and Their Influence on Language Choice
2-9. "Character and Civic Education"; then opens to
3. Discussion on two topics:
3-1. Language Hierarchy and MTL: Mother Tongue, Heritage Language, or Foreign Language
3-2. Future Challenges

Debates on Indigeneity in Asian Educational Contexts: Exploring Identity, Language Rights, and Conceptual Tensions
DOU Lajia

Debating Indigeneity in Chinese Education: Tensions Between Global Rights Frameworks and National Ethnic Harmony In comparative education, debates on indigeneity in China highlight a profound conceptual tension between international norms of Indigenous rights and the nation's domestic framework for ethnic integration, offering rich ground for reflecting on how identity shapes educational practices in a global age. These discussions center on whether ethnic minorities, such as Tibetans with their distinct linguistic, cultural, and historical ties to the Tibetan Plateau, qualify as Indigenous peoples under standards like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP's Articles 14 and 15 emphasize the right to community-controlled education in native languages and the inclusion of cultural histories in curricula to prevent assimilation and promote tolerance. In contrast, China's approach classifies these groups as shaoshu minzu (ethnic minorities) within the overarching Zhonghua minzu (Chinese nation), prioritizing multilingual policies that integrate minority languages with Mandarin to foster unity, equity, and socioeconomic progress.

This proposal engages these debates to explore their implications for mother-tongue instruction and cultural preservation, aligning with the conference theme by examining how scholars can navigate disagreements productively through shared values of diversity,

equity, inclusion, justice, and civility. By prioritizing tolerance for diverse perspectives—ranging from rights-based advocacy to integrationist rationales—the presentation underscores the virtues of peer engagement, where positionality inevitably influences interpretations but can enrich comparative dialogue if approached with scholarly integrity. The core issue of these debates is rooted in China's long-standing ethnic governance strategy, which traces back to the post-1949 ethnic classification project that recognized 56 groups, including the Han majority and minorities like Tibetans or Mongolians in China, as equal components of the nation. This model, influenced by concepts like Fei Xiaotong's "pluralist unity" from the 1980s, frames ethnic diversity as a harmonious mosaic under a unified national identity, with education serving as a key arena for this vision. Multilingual policies nominally support minority languages, as seen in the 1984 Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, but they increasingly emphasize Mandarin's role in economic development and social stability, often subsuming cultural distinctiveness into a pan-ethnic narrative. Scholars debate whether this constitutes a form of "Indigenous denialism," where the state refrains from granting separate Indigenous status—fearing implications for autonomy under UNDRIP Articles 3 and 4—to avoid challenges to territorial integrity. Instead, ethnic minorities are positioned as beneficiaries of integration, with indigeneity reduced to cultural traits rather than collective rights tied to land and self-determination.

This conceptual framing invites disagreement: Does it promote equity by enabling participation in national systems, or does it obscure structural disparities in language access and cultural representation? Comparative lenses from Asia amplify these questions, where UNDRIP-inspired policies have led to dedicated language revitalization programs, for example, in India's Scheduled Tribes framework, which balances affirmative action with state-driven uniformity but struggles with linguistic erosion in tribal regions. The significance of these debates lies in their direct bearing on educational equity and cultural sustainability in multi-ethnic Asia, where indigeneity challenges the balance between national cohesion and minority rights. In China, the push toward Mandarin-centric education—evident in policies like the 2014 Second-Generation Ethnic Policy—sparks scholarly contention over whether it advances inclusion by equipping minorities for a competitive job market or perpetuates assimilation by marginalizing mother-tongue instruction.

Proponents of a UNDRIP-aligned view argue that denying Indigenous status erodes unique traditions, such as Tibetan linguistic practices essential for cultural preservation, potentially affecting cognitive and social development for minority students. Conversely, integration advocates, drawing on state narratives, contend that framing all groups under Zhonghua minzu ensures equal opportunities, portraying minority cultures as enriching national heritage rather than requiring separate protections. This back-and-forth reflects broader Asian patterns: In ethnic diversity areas, debates over nomadic indigeneity question whether global rights frameworks support traditional knowledge in curricula or conflict with modernization drives. These exchanges are not merely abstract; they influence policy trajectories, highlighting whose voices dominate—often Han-centric or state-aligned perspectives—and the need for greater inclusion of minority scholars to counter positional biases.

As the conference theme prompts, the significance extends to modeling civility: By engaging opposing views with evidence from comparative studies, such as analyses of linguistic authority in minority contexts, scholars can foster tolerance, turning potential conflicts into avenues for justice-oriented reform. The focus of this presentation narrows to the core conceptual tensions in China's indigeneity debates and the pathways for equitable language policy. Central to this tension is the critique of "state-imposed color-blindness," a top-down ideology that treats ethnic groups uniformly to project inclusivity, yet overlooks disparities in resources and cultural needs—contrasting with Western color-blindness, which often arises from individual attitudes or judicial decisions like the 2023 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action.

In China, this manifests in educational narratives that equate equality with sameness, reframing demands for mother-tongue rights as threats to stability rather than expressions of UNDRIP-guaranteed protections. Scholars disagree on whether this obscures systemic barriers, such as the gradual erosion of minority languages through Mandarin prioritization, or effectively harnesses diversity for national progress, as in the promotion of visible cultural elements while sidelining deeper linguistic and philosophical traditions. Comparatively, this echoes Vietnam's ethnic minority policies, which integrate hill tribe languages into national systems but face contention over autonomy's scope.

The presentation focuses on how these debates interrogate positionality: Ethnic minority researchers may foreground the harms of denialism, such as reduced intergenerational transmission of heritage, while others emphasize integration's role in addressing historical disadvantages like lower incomes and limited representation. By confining the lens to these tensions—without prescriptive solutions—the focus invites reflection on conference sub-themes, such as norms for disagreement (e.g., evidence over emotion) and fostering tolerance for paradigms like cultural anthropology versus policy analysis.

The aims of this presentation are to deepen understanding of indigeneity debates in Chinese education while modeling constructive scholarly engagement, contributing to the conference's emphasis on dialogue and peer virtues. First, it aims to elucidate the historical and ideological underpinnings of China's ethnic framework, tracing how concepts like Zhonghua minzu evolved from early Communist policies to contemporary multilingual mandates, and contrasting this with UNDRIP's vision of distinct rights to highlight conceptual mismatches without judgment. This sets the stage for examining how debates unfold around key issues, such as whether Indigenous status would enhance protections for land, language, and self-governance, or complicate national unity efforts. Second, through an Asian comparative perspective, the presentation aims to broaden the scope to illustrate shared challenges—like balancing cultural specificity with socioeconomic integration—and unique resolutions, fostering a global-age appreciation of contextual nuance. Third, it seeks to address the conference's guiding questions on managing conflict: How do we teach disagreement in academic spaces, perhaps by structuring seminars around simulated policy clashes? How can positionality—such as a minority groups' emphasis on heritage preservation—inform rather than divide, and whose voices (e.g., minority epistemologies) need amplification to prevent dominance by mainstream narratives? By pursuing these aims, the presentation positions comparative education as a space for reflective practice, where

debates on indigeneity critique power imbalances while upholding civility, ultimately advancing equity in language rights without resolving to one-sided outcomes. In summary, these debates on indigeneity in China, viewed comparatively across Asia, underscore the field's potential to transform disagreement into a force for inclusive education.

Translanguaging as Conflict Transformation: Evidence from Culturally Diverse Education Research Group Meetings

Bonjovi HAJAN

Conflict is a critical component of collaboration in academia. In the context of culturally diverse research groups, conflicts could come in various forms, including disagreement of ideas between researchers or troubles-in-interaction. Sert (2015, p. 58) defines trouble-in-interaction as when there is an "emergence of a temporary misalignment in the unfolding of an interactional and pedagogical activity, which is oriented to by the participants as such through verbal and nonverbal means." Troubles-in-interaction in this sense can be manifested through repair (Schegloff et al., 1977), silence (Lestary et al., 2018), laughter (Jefferson, 2004), and gestures such as head shaking and gaze aversion (Matsumoto & Canagarajah, 2020). Trouble-in-interaction as a form of conflict is thus a constitutive feature of collective meaning-making in academic settings.

Despite growing attention to multilingualism in higher education, there is limited evidence to show how education researchers from diverse linguistic backgrounds and institutional roles navigate troubles-in-interaction as a form of conflict while sustaining collegiality and co-constructing knowledge. A plethora of research is available on negotiation strategies in research groups, but the focus does not lend directly to education field. For instance, the work of Sun and Canagarajah (2025) provides an insight into how how female scholars effectively communicate complex ideas, manage interactional troubles, and tactfully gain or yield the floor to other group members, but the study focuses on the STEM field. To address this gap, I explore translanguaging as conflict transformation in the context of a culturally diverse research group in education. My argument is that troubles-in-interaction as a form of conflict are a resource for collaborative knowledge-building in education research, and that it is of critical importance to understand them from the lens of translanguaging.

To this end, I situate my study within existing translanguaging perspectives (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging, as opined by Garcia and Wei (2014), is the use of speakers' full linguistic repertoires to make meanings. In this connection, Canagarajah (2013) uses the term, translingual negotiation strategies, to describe how speakers negotiate meanings in interactions. These strategies are composed of four concepts, which include envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and entextualization.

Against this backdrop, I seek answers to the following research questions: (1) How do culturally diverse education researchers negotiate troubles-in-interaction in research group meetings (RGMs)? (2) How do minoritized researchers gain the floor, assert agency and show resistance in RGMs? I aim to extend translanguaging theory by

demonstrating how conflict transformation as a negotiation of troubles-in-interaction operates. The data I used in this research were two audio-visual recordings of RGMs which I collected myself from the participants with informed consent. The RGMs were conducted by a culturally diverse team of education researchers at a state university in the southern Philippines.

At the time of the study, the team was working on developing an Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) framework. The members speak several local languages as their mother tongues, such as Sama, Tausug, Bisaya, and Tagalog. They hold different project roles, including project leader, lead researcher, and project staff. In analyzing the data, I manually transcribed the recordings of RGMs following Jefferson's (2004) conventions for conversation analysis and annotated multimodal cues using Mondada's (2018, 2019) guidelines. I adopted the procedure for conversation analysis by Sacks et al. (1974) to examine turn-by-turn interactions. I focused my analysis on sequences of troubles-in-interaction. I then mapped these sequences onto Canagarajah's (2013) four translingual negotiation strategies: envoicing, interactional negotiation, recontextualization, and entextualization. Furthermore, I examined closely how minoritized researchers exploited these strategies alongside semiotic resources to gain the floor, assert agency, and demonstrate resistance within social contexts.

My analysis revealed that troubles-in-interaction are inherent features of RGMs, not deficits. I found that participants exploited Canagarajah's (2013) translingual negotiation strategies to resolve troubles-in-communication. Envoicing allowed them to strategically convey their ideas. They employed code-switching, local lexicon, humor, and informal registers to encode identity, soften disagreement, or project authority. This negotiation strategy transformed tension into dialogue, enabling them to manage multiple worlds simultaneously. Interactional negotiation surfaced through repetition, repair, and clarification sequences. The participants used overlapping speech, silences, and embodied gestures to sustain participation and co-construct meaning. These strategies served as collaborative mechanisms that ensured participant's contribution was included, which corroborates joint problem-solving (Cavazos, 2017; Rincon-Mendoza, 2023). Recontextualization allowed the participants to connect micro-level disagreements to broader discourses, including institutional structures, Indigenous knowledge, or national education frameworks. Entextualization, meanwhile, engaged the participants in translating oral discussions into written notes, stabilizing consensus and ensuring visibility of all voices. This negotiation strategy not only resolved immediate disagreements but also documented contributions from minoritized researchers, which bolsters their participation and recognition. These findings align with prior studies (Im et al., 2022; Sun & Canagarajah, 2025). They underscore the potentialities of translanguaging as conflict transformation in academic and professional communication.

In examining further how minoritized researchers navigated troubles-in-interaction, I discovered that they skillfully employed translingual strategies to effectively participate within social contexts. They reclaimed the floor through envoicing, amplified prior contributions, and exploited semiotic resources such as hand gestures, humor, and laughter to challenge conventional turn-taking. These embodied strategies served as subtle, ethically sensitive forms of resistance. Through them, the minoritized participants

participated fully in translingual negotiation without violating conventions of collegiality. In this sense, translanguaging thus became not only a communicative tool but also an ethical resource for managing power and ensuring equitable participation (Choi, 2024; Fall, 2023; Sun & Canagarajah, 2025). Based on these findings, it can be said that troubles-in-interactions are not threats to academic collaboration but opportunities for effective negotiation. Translanguaging opens doors for minoritized researchers to navigate tension, negotiate authority, and co-construct knowledge. I reckon that translanguaging is then a powerful resource for conflict transformation. It is a socially distributed process, in which linguistic, embodied, and material resources come together to engender inclusive participation.

This study has both theoretical and practical implications. At the theoretical level, this research extends translanguaging and translingual scholarship to foreground conflict and power as critical analytic elements. I show that conflict transformation in multilingual academic spaces can be best understood as a translingual act as it encompasses negotiation of linguistic forms, academic legitimacy, and social relations. At the practical level, this study pinpoints that fostering inclusive communicative ecologies in research and academic settings is fundamental. This means a more equitable and dialogic environment emerges only when troubles-in-interaction are treated as resources for engagement and the voices of minoritized scholars are legitimized as valid.

Considering that the study is limited to two meetings within a single research group, I recommend that future research could extend this approach to multiple teams across institutional settings to understand how translanguaging as conflict transformation interact with various linguistic and cultural configurations. By fostering translanguaging as conflict transformation in this research, I pave the way for reimagining scholarly communication as an emergent, dialogic process that integrates diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives.

Private Tutoring Entrepreneurs in China: Narratives and Sensemaking in Multiple Social Cognitive Spaces

LI Jun, HU Xiao, GAO Ruotong & Gong Liling

Book Launch Description

Amid the global rise of educational privatization, accelerated by decades of neoliberal policy reform, digital innovation, and an intensifying demand for personalized learning, China's shadow education industry has emerged as one of the largest, most dynamic, and socially consequential ecosystems of private tutoring worldwide. Since the early 1990s, tutoring in China has evolved from an elite privilege to a nearly universal experience among urban families, interwoven with middle-class aspirations, parental anxieties, and the enduring pursuit of academic distinction. By 2020, studies estimated that nearly 89.5% of urban parents had enrolled their children in at least one form of extracurricular tutoring, and the market's total value had reached approximately 300 billion RMB (Gonyn, 2024). Beyond its staggering economic scale, the sector has become a vital—if often controversial—part of China's educational, social, and emotional landscape. It shapes how families invest in their children, how students spend their

childhoods, and how teachers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers negotiate the boundaries of what counts as "education."

Yet, despite its ubiquity and influence, one dimension of this vast system remains strikingly underexplored: the entrepreneurs who sustain it. These individuals—teachers, parents, investors, and dreamers—operate in a landscape characterized by extreme volatility. They are not passive market participants responding to supply and demand but social actors who constantly interpret, adapt to, and shape the rules that govern them. They build and rebuild institutions in the gaps left between policy and practice, state regulation and family demand, moral aspiration and economic necessity. Li Jun's Private Tutoring Entrepreneurs in China: Narratives and Sensemaking in Multiple Social Cognitive Spaces (Li, 2025) offers the first comprehensive, theoretically informed exploration of these actors and their world.

I. Contextualizing Shadow Education in Global Perspective

The book is situated against the backdrop of a global transformation in education, where the boundaries between the public and private, formal and informal, moral and commercial, have become increasingly blurred. Across continents, the privatization of education has expanded under the influence of neoliberal ideologies emphasizing efficiency, competition, and individual responsibility. The World Bank's advocacy for "public-private partnerships" and the OECD's learning outcome metrics have globalized an ethos that treats education not only as a public good but also as a private investment.

In this context, China's shadow education sector represents both a local manifestation of global neoliberalism and a deeply indigenous phenomenon rooted in Confucian cultural logics. While similar patterns of tutoring expansion have been observed in Japan, Korea, and Singapore, China's version has been shaped by unique institutional forces: an exam-centric education system anchored in the gaokao (national college entrance exam), intense school admission, and a highly decentralized regulatory environment. Li's research situates this complexity within what he terms "triple contextual tension"—the intersection of state governance, parental aspiration, and market dynamics.

Since the 1990s, China's private tutoring industry has undergone multiple waves of transformation. The early reform era (1990–2000) saw the emergence of "home tutors" and small local centers serving affluent families. The 2000s brought industrial consolidation, led by large chains such as New Oriental and TAL Education, which test-prep branding and capitalized on digital technologies. The 2010s introduced what Li calls the platformization of tutoring, as online learning platforms extended the reach of private education into every household. Finally, the 2021 Double Reduction Policy marked a dramatic rupture—an attempt by the state to reclaim authority over educational rhythms and social life by restricting for-profit tutoring for compulsory education students.

Li's book intervenes at this historical juncture, offering not merely a chronicle of regulatory change but a deep cultural and theoretical reflection on human agency within institutional flux.

II. Fieldwork in Chongqing: Urbanization, Culture, and Institutional Fluidity
The book's empirical foundation is grounded in a longitudinal immersive fieldwork in Chongqing, a municipality of 31.91 million residents located at the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing Rivers. As China's youngest provincial-level municipality and one of its fastest-urbanizing regions, Chongqing encapsulates the contradictions of contemporary development: rapid economic modernization juxtaposed with enduring local traditions and informal governance.

Li's choice of Chongqing as a field site is methodologically deliberate. Whereas megacities like Beijing and Shanghai exhibit hyper-regulated, elite-dominated tutoring markets, Chongqing represents what Li calls an "everyday microcosm" of China's educational transformation. The city's traditional culture including valuing directness, loyalty, and reciprocity, shapes entrepreneurial behavior as much as economic policy. Social ties forged through hotpot gatherings, neighborhood committees, and mahjong networks form the infrastructure through which trust, cooperation, and negotiation occur.

This cultural embeddedness makes Chongqing an ideal lens for examining Chinese guanxi not as a stereotype of corruption but as a lived social grammar of mutual obligation. Li's field work traverses both formal and informal spaces: licensed training centers with sleek glass offices and unregistered apartment-based studios tucked behind residential blocks; business conferences and policy seminars; parent chat groups and after-hours WeChat discussions. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, Li reconstructs the lived world of tutoring entrepreneurship—its risks, contradictions, and small triumphs.

III. Conceptual Architecture: Sensemaking in Multiple Social Cognitive Spaces
At its theoretical core, Private Tutoring Entrepreneurs in China advances an original framework that integrates Weick's sensemaking theory (1979). Sensemaking, in Weick's formulation, is the process through which individuals interpret ambiguous environments and construct plausible narratives that allow for coordinated action. It emphasizes that humans act not on objective facts but on meanings socially constructed through experience and interaction.

Li extends this framework beyond the corporate organizations Weick originally studied, applying it to the volatile, hybrid world of China's tutoring industry. He argues that entrepreneurs in this sector engage in continuous sensemaking across overlapping social cognitive spaces (Peverelli, 2000; Peverelli & Verduyn, 2012; Weick, 1979)—domains such as family, government bureaucracy, school systems, peer networks, and digital communities. Each space possesses its own moral codes, communicative rules, and power hierarchies. Entrepreneurs must learn to translate between these spaces: for example, adopting bureaucratic discourse when negotiating with local education bureaus, invoking familial loyalty when borrowing capital, and employing moral narratives of care and service when recruiting parents.

In this context, sensemaking becomes both a cognitive and cultural practice: a way of transforming chaos into coherence, constraint into opportunity, and ambiguity into efficiency. The "multiple inclusion" model of social integration underscores how Chinese

entrepreneurs operate not in a single institutional sphere but in the interstices between them, where ambiguity is the norm and relational negotiation the key survival skill.

IV. The Empirical Core: Narratives of Entrepreneurial Life

Li's book weaves together twenty richly detailed case studies that together form a tapestry of the tutoring ecosystem. Each story is grounded in extensive interviews, field visits, and documentary analysis (including business licenses, chat transcripts, marketing flyers, and class observation notes). These micro-histories allow Li to link macro-level structures to intimate human experiences, illustrating how institutional change is lived, narrated, and emotionally processed. The following are four in-depth case studies.

1. Melody Education (Ms. Li)

Ms. Li, a former public-school music teacher, began her entrepreneurial journey in a rented apartment with three students. Her transformation into the owner of a multi-branch chain exemplifies the fusion of moral purpose and strategic adaptation. Drawing on her upbringing in a military family that emphasized female independence, she combined pedagogical care with managerial discipline.

When the local school principal demanded she close her center, Ms. Li responded not through confrontation but through relational negotiation—offering free music workshops to the school's students in exchange for institutional endorsement. Her success was not simply financial but reputational: by performing community service, she gained legitimacy in both educational and bureaucratic spaces.

Her story also reveals the gendered dynamics of entrepreneurship. As a mother and business owner, Ms. Li constantly negotiated societal expectations of caregiving and leadership. She developed what Li terms care-oriented entrepreneurship: a relational mode of management that prioritizes empathy, memory, and moral reciprocity.

2. Alpha Education (Mr. Zeng)

Mr. Zeng's path into tutoring was born from failure. After losing his restaurant business and falling into debt, he reconnected with a high-school classmate via a WeChat alumni group that turned out to be life-changing. One classmate lent him 300,000 RMB with no contract, trusting in their shared past.

Alpha Education grew rapidly, specializing in shadow admissions—the covert preparation of students for entrance exams at elite middle schools. Mr. Zeng's narrative demonstrates how guanxi networks operate as moral economies of trust and reciprocity, rather than purely financial instruments. Following the Double Reduction Policy, he rebranded his business into featured training including coding, logic thinking, and creative writing drawing on the same parental networks that once sought academic tutoring.

For Li, Mr. Zeng embodies the improvisational rationality of Chinese entrepreneurship: the capacity to transform dormant guanxi ties into strong alliances, to pivot narratives from "exam success" to "future skills," and to find opportunity in uncertainty.

3. Excellent Education (Ms. Ling and Ms. Dan)
Two college graduates, Ms. Ling and Ms. Dan, launched Excellent Education with strong ambition. Their initial success—expanding from one to four centers—was followed by crisis when they hired a corporate CEO who challenged emergent corporate culture. The ensuing cultural clash decimated morale and retention.

In response, the founders embarked on what Li calls renewal sensemaking: they attended leadership programs, reinstated teacher autonomy, and restructured management around collaborative principles. This transformation illustrates how moral imagination functions as an adaptive resource, reaffirming purpose in the face of managerial rationalization.

4. Wisdom Education (Ms. Hui)
Ms. Hui, a former civil servant, faced near-collapse when she suffered from fund problems. Rather than closing, she demonstrated resilience and much social intelligence. When bureaucratic delays threatened her reopening, she mobilized intermediary guanxi through a chain of acquaintances, a retired teacher and her niece at a fire-safety company to secure approval. Ms. Hui's journey exemplified how small private tutoring business owner survived a series of internal and external crisis.

V. The Four-Stage Model of Tutoring Entrepreneurship
Drawing from all 20 cases, Li formulates a four-stage model that captures the cyclical, non-linear nature of entrepreneurship in China's tutoring industry:

1.Preparatory Stage (Entry Sensemaking): Individuals decide to enter tutoring by combining prior teaching experience with social capital. Motivations are often dual: "push" (escaping low pay or rigid hierarchies) and "pull" (seeking autonomy or moral fulfillment).

2.Founding Stage (Survival Sensemaking): Entrepreneurs establish operations with minimal capital, relying on bricolage—using homes as classrooms, family as staff, and WeChat as marketing. Guanxi networks compensate for lack of institutional support.
3.Growth Stage (Scale Sensemaking): Expansion introduces tensions between quality and profit, ethics and efficiency. Successful entrepreneurs create "cross-space rules" to bridge the moral economy of education and the commercial logic of business.

4.Bottleneck Stage (Renewal Sensemaking): Faced with crises, entrepreneurs must reinterpret their missions, learn new models, or exit. Renewal sensemaking often triggers identity transformation—becoming educators again, but of a different kind.

This model reframes entrepreneurship as cognitive evolution, highlighting resilience and learning rather than linear success.

VI. Guanxi as Relational Practice
One of Li's major theoretical innovations is his reconceptualization of guanxi as a performative practice rather than a fixed asset. Western literature has often interpret guanxi to nepotism or corruption; Li instead portrays it as a sophisticated social strategy

for managing uncertainty. Guanxi is performative—it must be enacted, maintained, and adapted.

The book identifies four primary guanxi functions in tutoring entrepreneurship:
- Fundraising: capital acquisition through moral trust and kinship reciprocity.
- Student Recruitment: relational marketing through school connections.
- Administrative Problem Solving: bureaucratic navigation through intermediaries familiar with state procedures.
- Brokerage for Arbitrage: bridging institutional holes between official prohibition and everyday demand (e.g., shadow admissions).

Li shows that guanxi not only enables survival but also generates moral meaning. It structures an alternative governance system in which relationships substitute for regulations, and obligation substitutes for enforcement.

VII. The Double Reduction Policy and Entrepreneurial Response
The 2021 Double Reduction Policy (DRP) was a watershed moment that redefined China's educational landscape. Its goals, to reduce student burden and family expenditure, reflected genuine public concern, yet its implementation destabilized millions of livelihoods.

Li categorizes three entrepreneurial responses:
- Transformation: Entrepreneurs reinvented their identities around non-academic niches such as arts, sports, and coding. This required both material and symbolic reorientation—reframing "tutoring" as "enrichment."
- Clandestine Operation: Others continued covertly, leveraging deep trust with parents to sustain underground tutoring ecosystems. These actors exhibit what Li terms moral justification sensemaking—reinterpreting rule-breaking as serving parental need.
- Exit: Some chose to withdraw altogether, seeing compliance as futile. For these entrepreneurs, exit was both an economic and emotional decision, signifying the end of a social world built over decades.

Li's analysis extends beyond description to critique. He argues that the DRP's unintended outcomes, rising inequality, black-market tutoring, and concentration of power in well-connected networks, demonstrate the limits of state control when cultural demand and informal governance persist. The persistence of shadow forms of education thus becomes a mirror reflecting deeper structural inequities.

VIII. Theoretical and Comparative Contributions
Private Tutoring Entrepreneurs in China makes three broad contributions to global scholarship.

1. Extending Sensemaking Theory Across Cultures
Li reinterprets Weick's framework through the lens of Chinese relationality, introducing indigenous concepts like guanxi (relationships) and mianzi (face) as cognitive resources. In contrast to the Western focus on individual cognition, Chinese sensemaking is

collective, situational, and moral anchored in the pursuit of relational harmony rather than abstract rationality.

2. Humanizing the Entrepreneur
By portraying entrepreneurs as ethically complex agents, Li challenges the binary stereotype of the Chinese businessperson as either opportunistic or oppressed. His protagonists act within constraints but retain moral imagination: Ms. Ling's refusal to cut teacher pay, Mr. Zeng and Chi's tuition waivers for poor students, and Ms. Li's free community classes exemplify how moral practice and market behavior coexist.

3. Reframing Policy and Inequality
Li positions shadow education as an outcome of systemic inequality rather than its cause. The book demonstrates that as long as access to quality schooling remains stratified, demand for tutoring, formal or informal, will persist. For policymakers, this insight reframes regulation not as suppression but as structural reform, requiring investment in teacher quality, equitable school funding, and diversified success pathways.

IX. Shadow Education in Comparative Perspective
The book's implications extend far beyond China. Shadow education has become a global phenomenon, from hagwons in South Korea and juku in Japan to coaching centers in India and Brazil. Li's framework offers a comparative vocabulary for analyzing how entrepreneurs navigate weak or hybrid institutional systems worldwide.

For instance, parallels can be drawn between Chinese guanxi and India's jugaad (creative improvisation), or between Chongqing's informal negotiations and Eastern Europe's post-Soviet "blat" networks. Across these contexts, relational entrepreneurship becomes a universal response to governance gaps and market uncertainty.
By integrating Chinese cases into global theorizing, Li's work bridges the epistemic divide between Western organizational theory and non-Western lived realities.

X. The CESHK Panel: Dialogue and Significance
At the CESHK Annual Conference, this book launch panel will gather scholars and entrepreneurs to engage with Li's contributions. The discussion will revolve around four overarching questions:

1. How does focusing on entrepreneurs transform our understanding of shadow education from a passive outcome of policy to an active process of institutional creation?
2. What does guanxi reveal about navigating institutional uncertainty in societies with incomplete formal regulation?
3. How can policymakers design frameworks that balance educational equity with entrepreneurial vitality?
4. What might the future hold for private tutoring in China amid emerging signals of market revival and regulatory relaxation?

For CESHK participants, the panel offers more than an introduction to a new book; it represents an invitation to reimagine comparative education as a discipline that listens to local epistemologies and moral economies.

XI. Broader Implications: Toward a Relational Theory of Educational Change
Ultimately, Private Tutoring Entrepreneurs in China is not only about tutoring or entrepreneurship, but about the human capacity to make meaning within constraint. Li's entrepreneurs are sensemakers par excellence: they translate uncertainty into possibility, moral aspiration into pragmatic action. Their narratives challenge deterministic models of policy implementation and reveal how social worlds are co-constructed through interpretation, negotiation, and care.

In a world where education increasingly oscillates between public mission and private enterprise, Li's work offers a relational theory of change, one that recognizes institutions not as fixed structures but as living networks of people interpreting, adapting, and reconfiguring the rules that govern them.

For scholars, the book provides a methodological exemplar of narrative-based theorizing, demonstrating how ethnography can generate conceptual innovation by grounding theory in lived experience. For policymakers, it offers cautionary insight into the limits of top-down reform. For educators and practitioners.

Empathy as Method: Reimagining Dialogue and Disagreement in Transnational Higher Education
Bhawana SHRESTHA

Introduction
Disagreement is inherent in comparative education. It is through confronting divergent perspectives that the field advances. Yet, as comparative education becomes increasingly transnational, disagreement acquires new emotional and relational dimensions. Students and educators now collaborate across languages, institutional cultures, and unequal geopolitical hierarchies. What happens when disagreement is not simply about ideas, but about values, norms, and lived realities? In this context, empathy becomes indispensable, not as sentimentality but as an ethical and epistemic orientation. The present study explores empathy as a method in transnational higher education, drawing on a four-week COIL project that brought together postgraduate students in China and secondary school students in Portugal to explore social-emotional learning (SEL) and global citizenship education (GCE). The project became an unintentional laboratory of disagreement: students misunderstood each other, struggled with technological delays, and confronted differences in classroom communication styles. Yet, rather than collapsing under these challenges, many students experienced transformation; learning to listen, adapt, and co-create knowledge across cultural and linguistic divides. The central argument of this paper is that empathy can serve as a methodological framework for engaging disagreement productively. By embracing difference as data and discomfort as dialogue, empathy enables deeper comparative insight and a more humane global scholarship.

Aims and Rationale
This paper aims to reimagine the role of empathy in comparative and transnational higher education by addressing three interconnected questions: How do students and educators experience and negotiate disagreement in transnational collaborative learning

environments? In what ways does empathy, as emotional literacy, reflexivity, and ethical stance, mediate intercultural tension and misunderstanding? How can empathy be conceptualised as a methodological orientation within comparative education to promote more inclusive and dialogic engagement? The rationale arises from two persistent tensions in global higher education. First, transnational education often aspires to cross-cultural harmony while neglecting the discomfort that genuine dialogue entails. Second, the intellectual labor of disagreement, especially its affective dimension, remains undervalued. In rethinking empathy as method, this paper contributes to current comparative education debates on diversity, civility, and scholarly integrity by proposing that emotional engagement is not a distraction from academic rigor but its precondition.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Empathy Beyond Emotion: A Methodological Stance Empathy is often understood as affective resonance, the ability to feel with others. Yet in educational research, empathy can also function as a way of knowing (Todd, 2003). As a methodological stance, empathy involves entering encounters with openness, recognizing that understanding another's perspective may remain incomplete. It resists assimilation and demands ethical humility. This approach resonates with relational ethics (Boler, 1999), which foregrounds responsibility in how we engage with others' pain, anger, or difference. It also aligns with SEL frameworks (CASEL, 2023), which emphasize self-awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making as foundational for social participation. When applied to research and pedagogy, empathy allows us to reframe disagreement from a threat to a site of potential understanding.

Comparative Education and the Virtue of Disagreement

In comparative education, disagreement has epistemic value. It highlights the multiplicity of truths and underscores the situatedness of knowledge. However, the field often privileges rational dialogue over emotional reflexivity, assuming that civility alone ensures fairness. This paper argues that emotional literacy; awareness of how power, positionality, and vulnerability shape interaction, is essential for sustaining meaningful scholarly dialogue. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) model (Garrison et al., 2000) provides an additional conceptual anchor. Its dimensions; cognitive, social, and teaching presence, illustrate how intellectual engagement depends on emotional connection. Integrating CoI with SEL foregrounds empathy as the connective tissue between disagreement and understanding.

Methodology and Design Research Context

The empirical foundation of this study is a four-week COIL project implemented in spring 2024 between a Sino-British transnational university in China and a secondary school in Portugal. Fourteen postgraduate students (ages 22–27) served as mentors to twelve high school students (ages 16–18), engaging in synchronous and asynchronous sessions on Microsoft Teams and Padlet. The project's central theme was Empathy and Global Citizenship.

Learning Design

The project was structured around four phases (see Table 1): Self and Emotion Awareness: Students reflected on their emotional responses to intercultural collaboration.

Intercultural Dialogue: Role-plays and discussions on cultural sensitivity and communication styles. Conflict Resolution and Collaboration: Group projects addressing global issues like climate justice and education inequality. Reflection and Mentorship: Joint presentations and reflective writing. Table 1. Weekly Overview of COIL Activities Week Theme Core Activity Pedagogical Focus 1 Introduction to SEL & GCE Padlet reflections Emotional self-awareness 2 Empathy & Cultural Sensitivity Role-play scenarios Perspective-taking 3 Communication & Conflict Resolution Case study analysis Dialogue and negotiation 4 Mentorship & Reflection Collaborative project + video presentations Co-creation and closure Data Collection and Analysis Data comprised 26 reflective narratives (12 from Portuguese students, 14 from Chinese postgraduates). Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps, identifying recurring patterns around anxiety, empathy, communication, and transformation. Credibility was strengthened through peer debriefing between facilitators and cross-validation of emerging themes.

Findings:
When Disagreement Becomes Data Anxiety as Entry Point Students initially experienced multiple forms of anxiety; linguistic, technological, evaluative, and relational. One Portuguese student wrote, "The accent and speed made me nervous, but it taught me to listen differently." Similarly, a Chinese participant admitted, "I was afraid of offending someone by saying the wrong thing." These anxieties, rather than hindering learning, served as gateways to empathy. They revealed the vulnerability inherent in dialogue across difference. Over time, students reframed anxiety as part of learning to be with uncertainty, a key skill in comparative inquiry. Empathy as Relational Practice Repeatedly, students identified empathy and patience as transformative. "Empathy is not just feeling sad for others," one postgraduate reflected, "it's about slowing down and listening when we disagree." Through structured activities and reflection, empathy emerged as both emotional regulation and epistemic openness, allowing participants to hold contradictory views without seeking immediate resolution. Misunderstanding as Method Moments of miscommunication became methodological lessons. One mentor noted, "Sometimes we misunderstood small details, but each time we cleared it up, we understood each other better." Rather than minimizing disagreement, the project's design encouraged students to articulate misunderstandings explicitly, making them part of the shared learning process. This reflexivity exemplifies empathy as method: treating conflict as data rather than deviation. Power, Positionality, and Patience The interaction between Chinese postgraduate mentors and Portuguese high school mentees introduced implicit hierarchies. Yet, empathy disrupted these dynamics. When one mentor realized her directive tone was silencing younger students, she reflected, "Empathy means letting go of control and trusting the other person's way." Similarly, Portuguese students expressed appreciation for mentors' humility, describing them as "partners" rather than "teachers." Empathy, in this sense, operated as a democratizing force.

Discussion:
Toward an Empathic Comparative Ethic
The findings suggest that empathy redefines how we approach disagreement in transnational higher education. Three major insights emerge:

Disagreement as Emotional Labor

Disagreement is not just intellectual; it requires emotional resilience. The capacity to stay engaged amid discomfort is an underacknowledged academic skill. As comparative educators, recognising emotional labor expands our understanding of what constitutes scholarly engagement. In this project, emotional literacy, students' ability to name, manage, and learn from emotion, was integral to sustaining dialogue. This challenges the assumption that rationality alone maintains civility in academic spaces.

Empathy as Methodological Reflexivity

Empathy as method demands reflexivity about one's positionality. For transnational educators, this means acknowledging privilege, linguistic power, and cultural norms. In practice, it involves listening without presuming equivalence, allowing disagreement to reveal rather than conceal difference. This stance parallels Todd's (2003) notion of learning from the Other, where empathy is a process of encountering limits to understanding rather than erasing them. Through this lens, disagreement becomes an ethical site of comparative education—where knowledge is co-produced through respect for incompleteness.

Designing for Empathic Disagreement

The COIL design showed that disagreement can be intentionally scaffolded. Activities emphasizing reflection, storytelling, and perspective-taking transformed anxiety into agency. Pedagogically, this calls for reimagining curricula that teach disagreement; not to avoid conflict, but to engage it ethically. For educators, modeling empathy involves transparency about our own uncertainties and inviting students to explore the emotional undercurrents of collaboration.

Implications

Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to comparative education by: Bridging affect theory, SEL, and global education discourse. Conceptualizing empathy as both affective and epistemic, expanding the methodological repertoire of comparative inquiry. Illustrating that disagreement, when mediated by empathy, enhances rather than undermines scholarly integrity.

Pedagogical and Institutional Practice

Empathy as method has concrete implications: For teachers: Incorporate structured reflection and emotional check-ins in transnational or online projects. For institutions: Recognize emotional literacy as a learning outcome in transnational education quality frameworks. For students: Develop metacognitive awareness of how feelings shape engagement, criticality, and collaboration.

Policy Considerations

At the policy level, institutions can embed empathy-driven frameworks in internationalization strategies. COIL and similar models democratize access to global education while cultivating intercultural empathy. Rather than emphasizing fluency or productivity, such models prioritize ethical dialogue, relational accountability, and shared vulnerability, core conditions for sustainable international partnerships.

Conclusion

Empathy as Comparative Praxis

In transnational higher education, disagreement is inevitable, but how we navigate it defines our intellectual and moral horizons. This paper positions empathy as method, an intentional, reflexive practice that transforms discomfort into dialogue. Empathy does not erase difference; it sustains it through care, curiosity, and humility. For comparative educators, this means embracing emotion as a legitimate mode of inquiry and disagreement as a pedagogical tool. Empathy as method invites us to reimagine comparative education not as a search for equivalence, but as a collective experiment in understanding across difference, a practice where the heart and the intellect meet.

Navigating epistemic injustice with resilience and agency: an ethnography from early career researchers in comparative education studies

ZHANG Guo Gloria

1. Introduction

Disagreement is an inevitable part of scholarship, including comparative education on educational policy studies, yet navigating it requires a series of condition, particularly epistemic agency from the researchers. This paper reflects on the question: How do we engage with opposing views while maintaining scholarly integrity? We are two early career researchers, one from Hong Kong and the other from Ghana, working in decolonial studies of educational policy. Both of us completed our PhDs and began academic positions at Australian universities this year. We use autoethnography to explore how moments of conflict and tension with theories, supervisors, and institutional expectations, became turning points in sustaining epistemic agency.

2. Aims and Theoretical Lens

This study aims to illuminate how epistemic agency influence the practice of integrity when scholars encounter opposing epistemic paradigms. Author 1's doctoral study is informed by Asia as method (Chen, 2010) and critical syncretism (Takayama, 2016, Zhang, 2025), both of which encourage dialogue between traditions rather than submission to one. These frameworks enabled her to treat disagreement as a site of learning, a generative friction rather than a failure of alignment. Author 2's doctoral study is based on Paulo Freire theory, while he took a localised approach, and developed a leadership theory in Gahana's school context. Drawing on Dotson (2014) an Mignolo (2007), we regard epistemic agency as one act upon one's own knowing amid asymmetrical academic power structures, and resilience as the capacity to remain open, reflexive, and ethically grounded when one's beliefs are challenged. Within this framing, scholarly integrity becomes a relational practice rather than a static moral position, it involves accountability to oneself, to the community, and to the context that gives meaning to one's work.

3. Methodology

We adopt critical autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) as a method in understanding our experience. Our data consist of supervision notes, reflective journals, and correspondence across different stages of my PhD. Writing autoethnographically allowed us to revisit these exchanges with a sense of compassion and critical distance. Critical

autoethnography here functions as epistemic reflexivity, as a way to trace how our intellectual identity evolved through confrontation, confusion, and realignment. It highlights how power operates subtly within academic advice, and how maintaining agency often means learning to say no, but with care. The method also provides a bridge between personal experience and collective conditions in doctoral education, revealing how disagreement can become transformative when handled dialogically.

4. Narratives (key episodes)
Locating Ourselves: Two Localised Journeys toward Scholarly Integrity We are two early career researchers, one from Hong Kong and the other from Ghana, working in decolonial studies of educational policy. Both of us completed our PhDs and began academic positions at Australian universities this year. Despite our different trajectories, we share a commitment to localised approaches to knowledge-making that value lived contexts as legitimate sites of theorisation. Our doctoral journeys, though distinct, resonate in how we each faced moments of tension when dominant theories met the realities of our contexts.

Author 1
Growing across Borders I grew up in mainland China during the 1990s, a time of multiple and competing political systems shaped by dramatic geopolitical transitions. Moving from Xi'an, an inland metropolis—to Hong Kong, and later to Melbourne, I developed a dynamic and flexible way of seeing the world: not East versus West, but East and West at the same time. This orientation shaped my academic life, encouraging me to search for analytical approaches that could move beyond binaries and attend to contextual complexity. Early in my PhD, I was encouraged to frame my study through established Western theories of leadership and policy enactment. While these frameworks appeared rigorous, they felt detached from the lived realities of Hong Kong schools. I began to feel "right but wrong", as though my research fitted academic expectations but missed something vital in the context I knew. The tension grew until it became unsustainable. Eventually, I decided to change my supervision team, an emotionally difficult but intellectually necessary decision. Engaging with new supervisors, two white Australian scholars, reshaped my research journey. They shared my curiosity for context and complexity, and our conversations helped me articulate what had long been intuitive that integrity lies not in rejecting the West but in critically negotiating across differences. Through these exchanges, I found the courage to ground my study in local realities while remaining open to global perspectives. What began as dissonance became a process of re-grounding: learning that theory can grow from lived encounters rather than being imposed from above.

Author 2
Holding Ground through Change My co-author's doctoral experience took place in a different geographical and disciplinary space but carried similar challenges. Working under supervisors from two contrasting Western traditions of leadership studies, he often struggled with how to phrase his arguments in ways that satisfied both. The process was marked by uncertainty and long periods of redirection. Yet, despite these difficulties, he persisted with his intellectual vision. When his supervision circumstances later changed, he continued to refine his work with patience and determination. Through this

persistence, his project matured into coherent research that reflected his own local perspective and professional identity. The struggle was not simply about satisfying supervisors but about holding ground—staying true to what mattered most in his research, even when that meant slower progress or moments of isolation. In the end, this commitment brought both clarity and confidence. Although our journeys unfolded in different regions, both revealed how scholarship involves continual negotiation between personal conviction and external expectation. Disagreement was not something to avoid but something to live with, a space where our ideas and selves were tested and reshaped. Each episode of tension became an opportunity to rediscover purpose and to grow more assured in our ways of knowing. Looking back, we recognise that our localised approaches emerged not from rejection of others but from the gradual process of finding a voice that feels grounded and honest. It was through these crossings, between supervisors, between contexts, between systems of thought, that we learned what integrity means in practice. Our stories are not about resistance for its own sake but about staying present in the struggle to think, write, and act from where we are.

6. Conclusion

Through this autoethnographic reflection, I argue that disagreement is not a threat to scholarly integrity but its testing ground. Integrity is enacted when scholars hold their ground while remaining open, when they learn to listen critically and respond ethically. My own and Dare's journeys show that supervision changes, theoretical frictions, and moments of exhaustion can all become catalysts for epistemic growth. To engage with opposing views responsibly is to practice both courage and care, to keep faith with one's intellectual vision while honouring the multiplicity that makes scholarship alive.

Applying an 'interdependent mode of engagement' on debates about education and environmental sustainability: a reflexive exercise of junior scholars

HIRAKITA-JOHRDEN Kotaro & TEH Huijia

Aims

This paper undertakes a reflexive exercise on applying Takayama's (2025) proposed 'interdependent mode of engagement' on discourses on environmental sustainability in comparative education (CE). While the approach was developed from the position of being directly criticized by part of the academic community, we, as junior researchers, experiment with the interdependent approach from an outsider's perspective while reading and examining whose voices dominate these debates. We aim to identify combative 'arguments by refutation' (Kasulis, 2018), which are prone to a sense of self-righteousness and lack of humility and critical reflexivity (Takayama, 2025, p. 142), both within the discourses as well as within ourselves while engaging with them. Instead of sticking with the arguments by refutation, we aim to let the seemingly opposing arguments engage with each other in an interdependent way, highlighting their intersections, strengths, and limitations in an experimental self-reflective exploration to demonstrate how we assimilate and incorporate these debates into our academic identities, which are still in the process of being shaped and reshaped.

Methods
This study employs autoethnographic accounts of our attempt, as two junior scholars in the field of CE with a common interest in education and sustainability, to apply the 'interdependent mode of engagement (Takayama, 2025) on selected debates on education and environmental sustainability. Throughout this process, we attempt to see these academic debates as educative encounters with Others (Biesta, 2013) in the pluriverse, enabling moments of interruption of our ways of thinking and being.

Based on a heuristic approach at risk of reduced complexity, we identify two broad, seemingly conflicting, discursive patterns regarding the role of education, which are the voices of environmental modernization and ecological cultural decolonialization:

A) Environmental modernization (mainstream): This pattern views education as the solution for the environmental crisis through the promotion of Western-model modernization, techno-solution approaches, and cognitive and/or behavioral change paradigms. It is popular amongst international organizations, policymakers, and broad parts of the policy-oriented scientific community, as it promises green growth without challenging mainstream progress and development paradigms, and thus, does not require fundamental systemic change.

B) Ecological cultural decolonization (marginal): This discursive strand critiques the mainstream approaches of environmental modernization as promoting the business as usual and part of the cause of the environmental crisis. Instead, education is seen as the solution for environmental crisis through deep cultural change towards ecological interdependence, integrating pluriverse worldviews and alternative onto-epistemologies, including religio-cultural ones, to challenge Western notions of progress and development, as well as its individualistic, rationalist, and positivist paradigms. We undertake an interdependent mode of reading selected texts that represent these discursive strands to explore how our personal scholarly identities are shaped by our positionality and experiences, which then overlap with the assimilation and internal negotiation of the CE field's dominant discursive patterns in the debates on education and environmental sustainability.

Arguments and Outcomes
Our reflexive exercise uncovers three themes at the nexus of discourse, power, and academic engagement. The first theme of our study centers around our attempt to let the two identified discursive strands speak to each other in an interdependent way. The second theme focuses on our internal engagement with the readings and the difficulty to engage with them on their own terms without reflexively refuting the arguments based on our engagement with other readings. The third theme then shifts the focus to a critical self-reflection on our positionality and limits of criticality as junior scholars.
Some of the expected arguments and outcomes of these three themes are worthwhile to highlight:

Theme 1: Environmental Modernization as a Necessity for Deeper Cultural Transformation?

In our attempt to let the discursive strands speak to each other in an interdependent way without refutation, we acknowledge the partiality of each strand, each with varying priorities for the addressed levels of action. Yet, both strands believe in education (in a broad sense with qualitative differences) as the means to achieve environmental sustainability. Integrating technical, cognitive, and behavioral responses in a deeper cultural transformation based on an interdependent human-nature relationship (as opposed to an anthropocentric worldview that treats nature as a mere resource) prevents mere greenwashing that simply extends the duration of the illusion of unlimited growth and that all societies can reach Rostow's final stage of development as the mass-consumer society. Our attempt to read and integrate these two discursive strands leads us to conjecture that as cultural transformation cannot be achieved in a short period of time, environmental modernization extends the time window in which a deeper ecological cultural transformation can take place.

Theme 2: Overcoming Our Reflexive Arguments of Refutation

As junior scholars, we tend to create bridges between the diverse intellectual debates we have learned about to make sense of the complexity of CE as a field, without having the actual confidence in the legitimacy to connect these debates. For example, questions that come to mind while reading the core texts include: How can debates about the educationalization of social problems with historical roots in Presbyterian Protestantism and doubts about the romantic view on education as the solution for these problems (e.g., Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008; Tröhler, 2017; 2019) enrich/challenge the debates on education and environmental sustainability? What is the issue of time in the face of a seemingly urgent need for quick actions required for climate change mitigation that stands in contrast to the time required for the transformation of the education system and culture? How does this relate to the internal contradictions of the eco-emancipatory project, the rise of authoritarian regimes, third modernity, and the nexus of post-sustainability and post-democracy (e.g., Blühdorn, 2025)? Is the effort of education for environmental sustainability a similar unachievable but unavoidable project as education equity? Connecting these rather diverse and big debates, it is tempting to raise arguments of refutation against the identified discourse strands on education and environmental sustainability. The way we were trained academically compelled us to always link arguments in the text with larger themes in existing literature, drawing connections between new and old knowledge instead of first engaging with the text on its own terms. This raises questions about the legitimacy of connecting these debates and how to remain open to integrating these debates in an interdependent way, resisting the temptation of simple refutation.

Theme 3: Positionality and Limits of Criticality

Our way of engagement with this study is indeed shaped by our positionality, serving as a filter and catalyst for interdependence. While the basic education experiences of the authors contrast (what is often described as) 'rote-learning' in Malaysia to 'structured freedom' Steiner pedagogy in Germany, they both completed their undergraduate degrees in a European university. Yet, our intellectual training in the field of education came from different traditions: English Language Teaching with a practical orientation

at an UK University and (comparative) education with a foundational theoretical and research orientation (German: Erziehungswissenschaft) at a German University where education is considered as an own discipline instead of a field of study. Both researchers are now pursuing postgraduate education in Japan, majoring in international studies and education respectively, sharing a common interest in (higher) education and sustainability. The shared experiences in East Asia, superimposed upon different past experiences in Europe, create a merging of educational traditions of East and West that become the lens through which we filter the texts before even engaging with them. We argue that the interdependent mode of reading becomes more vital due to our positionalities, as it compels us to move beyond dichotomous refutation but instead seek the educative value even while engaging dominant discourses on education and environmental sustainability in CE. In this context, we also reflect on the limits of criticality for junior scholars.

Drawing on Silova and Auld's (2020) images of the acrobat, phantom, and fool, we argue that for junior scholars, the extent of genuine critical engagement or disagreement with established scholarly discourse is limited. As junior scholars, the extent we can engage critically or disagree with scholarly discourse is limited by our experience, resources, and even the academic circles we belong to. Moving from our graduate schools, where we study international studies and education respectively into CE, we often contort our language and arguments to fit into the rhetoric of dominant or established CE paradigms, debates, and discourses. However, perhaps this is not inherently negative, as we are assimilating the vocabulary, concepts, arguments and debates within dominant discourses in CE, with English as our second language, before honing the ability to form our own coherent arguments. While fighting for survival and visibility in academia, we wonder if we have simultaneously become grotesque phantoms mimicking the accepted norms in CE, while risking being fools by engaging with the discourse on education and sustainability from our limitations.

No Longer at the Margins: Disagreement, Discernment, and the Ethics of Relational Leadership in Comparative Education

Sreehari RAVINDRANATH, Joseph Thomas RIJO & Amit Kumar VISHWANATH

Abstract

Background and Rationale

Comparative education, as an intellectual and moral enterprise, has long drawn its vitality from the plurality of paradigms, positionalities, and epistemic traditions that traverse global contexts. Yet the very diversity that sustains the field also renders it vulnerable to hierarchies of knowledge and authority that perpetuate unequal relations between the Global North and the Global Majority. In the present moment—marked by intensifying calls for decolonial critique, epistemic justice, and plural validity—the question is not merely whose knowledge circulates, but how disagreement, dissonance, and dissent are held within the architecture of collaboration. The field's sustainability depends less on the achievement of consensus and more on the cultivation of a disciplined ethic of disagreement: the capacity to stay in relationship amidst conflict, to act with discernment in ambiguity, and to enact justice with care. Our reflections arise from the Networks for Education Systems Transformation (NEST) initiative, a multi-country collaborative

platform convened by the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution. NEST brings together researchers and practitioner-leaders from ten Global Majority countries—including India, Uganda, Peru, and South Africa—to reimagine education system transformation through shared inquiry. Over three years of engagement, the authors participated in joint dialogues, policy labs, and collaborative writing processes that foregrounded the relational and ethical dimensions of system transformation. In these encounters, disagreement surfaced not as rupture but as revelation—exposing the implicit hierarchies of evidence, method, and legitimacy that shape the comparative education landscape. This paper therefore repositions disagreement as a generative epistemic and moral force, central to re-founding the discipline on the principles of reciprocity, relational accountability, and collective discernment.

Conceptual Orientation:
Toward a Relational Ethics of Disagreement The paper advances a theoretical framing of relational ethics of disagreement, grounded in three interdependent virtues—discernment, reciprocity, and justice-with-love—which together reconfigure leadership as an ethical and dialogic practice rather than an exercise of authority.

1. Discernment draws on Aristotelian phronesis and feminist ethics of care to denote the capacity for wise judgment in conditions of plurality. It requires holding tension without premature closure, acting with humility amid uncertainty, and recognising the limits of one's standpoint.

2. Reciprocity entails a conscious redistribution of authority—an ethics of following as much as leading. It invites the practice of listening as a form of scholarship and yielding as a mode of power, thus re-centering humility and responsiveness in cross-cultural collaboration.

3. Justice-with-Love synthesises structural critique with affective responsibility. While justice demands confrontation with inequity, love anchors that confrontation in relationship. The two, in tandem, prevent critique from hardening into cynicism or solidarity from dissolving into sentimentality. Together, these principles challenge the civility discourse that often sanitises disagreement in academic spaces. They locate ethical relationality at the heart of comparative education—proposing that disagreement, when practiced with discernment and love, is not antithetical to unity but constitutive of genuine dialogue. Such an approach reframes disagreement as both a method of inquiry and a moral discipline, essential for navigating the epistemic asymmetries of the global education project.

Methodological Orientation:
Transitional and Reflexive Inquiry
Methodologically, the paper adopts a transitional and reflexive orientation, informed by relational and participatory epistemologies. Our analytic material derives from three years of engagement within NEST—across virtual dialogues, regional convenings, reflective writing workshops, and collaborative design processes. These were not

conventional data-collection sites but transitional spaces: interstitial zones of movement, pause, and encounter that allowed participants to engage difference without resolution.

The inquiry unfolded through cycles of collective journaling, co-author debriefs, and dialogic reflection sessions that traced the affective and ethical dynamics of collaboration—moments of silence, discomfort, rupture, and repair. Analysis was iterative and emergent, privileging relational interpretation over categorical coding. In this sense, insights were formed rather than found; knowledge emerged through the practice of being in relationship with difference. The stance was facilitative and dialogic, foregrounding participation and mutual recognition rather than extraction or representation. This reflexive approach aligns with recent methodological turns in comparative education that foreground epistemic humility (Tikly 2020; Crossley & Watson 2022) and plural validity (Ravindranath 2025), recognising that the process of collaboration itself constitutes an object of inquiry. By reading our collaborative experience as text, we interrogated the infrastructures of knowledge production that govern who speaks, who listens, and how we repair when trust is strained.

Emergent Insights

1. Disagreement as a Mirror of Power

Dialogues across contexts repeatedly revealed how global vocabularies of "systems transformation" and "scaling" often carried Northern epistemic assumptions of evidence, linearity, and success. When disagreement surfaced—over frameworks, language, or legitimacy—it acted as a mirror reflecting the structural inequities inscribed in global partnerships. Attending to this mirror compelled teams to re-imagine whose knowledge counts and what forms of knowing are rendered audible in defining change.

2. Discernment over Doctrine

Effective collaboration demanded a slowing down of interpretive reflexes. Rather than resolving tensions through procedural consensus, participants learned to stay with the trouble—to inhabit discomfort as a site of ethical depth. Discernment emerged as a leadership act: the courage to delay closure, to invite multiple truths into conversation, and to hold paradox without erasure.

3.Relational Leadership as Shared Flow

Leadership practices that fostered learning were those that circulated power—rotating facilitation, authorship, and agenda-setting across teams. This "ebb and flow" created psychological safety for disagreement and nurtured a sense of shared stewardship. Leadership thus became less about positional authority and more about curating relational flow—an emergent rhythm of leading and being led that sustained collaborative integrity.

4.Justice-with-Love as Praxis

Collaborative work revealed that justice without love easily ossifies into critique, while love without justice collapses into avoidance. Bridging the two generated a praxis of critical tenderness—an orientation that enabled partners to confront inequity while preserving connection. This balance proved indispensable for decolonising partnerships, particularly when structural asymmetries of funding, visibility, and language persisted.

Discussion:
From Methodological to Ethical Pluralism These insights invite a paradigm shift in comparative education—from methodological pluralism, which tolerates multiple approaches, to ethical pluralism, which re-designs the moral infrastructure of collaboration. Managing disagreement becomes a question not of etiquette but of institutional design: how authorship is shared, how feedback loops are structured, how convenings make space for dissent, and how review processes recognise relational labour as intellectual labour. Such re-design requires what Santos (2018) calls ecologies of knowledge: relational infrastructures that sustain multiplicity without hierarchy. Within these ecologies, rigor is redefined—not merely as procedural coherence but as relational integrity. The quality of scholarship is inseparable from the quality of relationship through which knowledge is co-created. Disagreement, in this sense, is not an obstacle to rigor but its very condition: it signals the presence of plurality, reflexivity, and moral engagement. Furthermore, the findings underscore the necessity of slow scholarship—a deliberate deceleration of academic production that values reflection, reciprocity, and repair. In an era where policy imperatives and donor logics reward efficiency and output, the cultivation of slow, dialogic processes constitutes an act of epistemic resistance. By institutionalising practices of shared authorship, extended dialogue, and relational accountability, comparative education can re-align its ethics with its emancipatory aspirations.

Conclusion:
Learning to Disagree Well To be "no longer at the margins" is not merely to amplify voices from the Global Majority but to transform the epistemic ethics that structure whose voices are heard and how they are held. The future of comparative education will hinge on its ability to disagree well—to engage difference with humility, to sustain curiosity amidst conflict, and to value discernment over dominance. Disagreement, when grounded in love and justice, becomes the lifeblood of comparative inquiry: it nurtures reflexivity, sharpens moral imagination, and anchors collaboration in the shared pursuit of human flourishing. As education systems and scholarly communities confront escalating polarisation, the challenge before us is relational rather than methodological: to listen longer, move slower, and lead with humility. Comparative education's renewal depends on its capacity to design relationships that can hold difference without fracture—to transform disagreement from a symptom of division into a practice of collective discernment. In re-centering ethics as infrastructure, the field reclaims its deeper purpose—not simply to compare systems, but to connect humanity through the disciplined practice of learning across difference.

Internationalization of Local Private Universities for Sustainable Regional Development in Japan: Glocal Human Resources and Multicultural Coexistence Society
WATABE Yuki

Introduction
The internationalization of higher education has been central to higher education policies across the globe for the past three decades. In East Asia, including Japan, internationalization has historically been understood as a means of modernizing

education systems and societies driven by a desire to catch up with Western nations (Yang, 2016). By the late 1990s, this modernization agenda had become deeply intertwined with the need to enhance the national competitiveness in an increasingly globalized and knowledge-based economy (Watabe et. al., 2025). As global economic interconnectedness deepened and competition for global talent intensified, Japan shifted its internationalization strategies toward developing world-class universities. Major government initiatives such as Japan's Center of Excellence program (2002, 2007), Global 30 (2009), Top Global University Project (2014), and Universities for International Research Excellence (2022) have focused largely on a small number of elite, research-oriented universities. Smaller private universities, especially those in regional areas, have remained peripheral to this global push. However, demographic challenges, such as aging populations and declining birth rates, have added a new dimension to the higher education policy agenda in the mid-2010s. As the need to develop human capital that can address both global and local challenges has become paramount, especially in regions outside metropolitan areas, the internationalization of universities has evolved as a key driver of sustainable regional development.

Policy Context

Regional Revitalization and Higher Education

In 2014, Japan introduced the Regional Revitalization Policy, a comprehensive national strategy designed to maintain vibrant communities and reverse regional population decline (Cabinet Secretariat, 2014). Within this policy framework, universities were identified as key hubs for regional revitalization, serving as magnets for talent and engines for local innovations. Following this, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) implemented the Five-Year Strategy for Revitalizing Regional Universities and Other Higher Education Institutions. In 2018, the Central Council for Education issued a report titled Ground Design for Higher Education Toward 2040, which identified five key societal trends that shaped the future: sustainability, Society 5.0, longevity, globalization, and regional revitalization, and proposed how higher education should be designed in relation to these societal changes. To transform Japan into a multi-polar and decentralized nation, the report called for universities, particularly those in regional areas, to act as centers of knowledge and human resource development as well as hubs for responding to regional internationalization. It urged them to collaborate with local industries and governments to discuss and design a grand vision for regional higher education. In 2021, the University Subcommittee of the Central Council for Education released a report titled The Future Role of Universities in Regional Communities: Achieving Local Revitalization and Establishing Universities as Regional Hubs. This report reinforced the idea that, as Japan's population ages rapidly and domestic demand continues to shrink, the regional areas must pursue opportunities through global connections. It highlighted that universities should play a central role in this endeavor. Further, universities are expected to be central actors in developing globally competent human resources who can also contribute to local revitalization, and in building a multicultural coexistence society that integrates diverse populations into regional life. These policy developments represent the emergence of internationalization for local sustainability. Within this new framework, regional universities are increasingly recognized as potential catalysts for both educational reform and community development.

Purpose of Study

This study aims to examine how small, regional private universities in Japan are adopting internationalization strategies to contribute to sustainable regional development in the context of population decline and aging. Japan's higher education system has reached the universal stage of participation, with over 60% of high school graduates entering universities (MEXT, 2025). Approximately 80% of these students attend private universities, and about 80% of those institutions enroll fewer than 4,000 students. Such small-scale universities, many located outside metropolitan areas, collectively educate nearly one-third of all students in Japan's private higher education sector. Historically, these universities have played critical roles in supplying human capital to regional labor markets, educating local teachers, healthcare workers, and professionals who sustain regional economies. Yet, declining youth population and urban migration have made it increasingly difficult for them to maintain enrollment levels and financial viability. This study focuses on two small, local private universities that have received competitive government funding specifically designated for internationalization and regional revitalization. It aims to understand how these institutions conceptualize and implement internationalization efforts aligned with local development objectives.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine internationalization practices in two small, regional private universities. These universities were asked to complete a survey on their current internationalization practices, including their strategies, objectives, and initiatives. Additionally, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, such as senior leaders, academics, and administrators involved in university-wide internationalization or regional revitalization activities. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, one-on-one format and lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. With the participants' consent, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. To complement the interviews and survey data, institutional documents were also analyzed. These documents provided evidence of internationalization and regional revitalization activities, as well as background contextual information for each university.

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary evidence indicates that these universities are reframing internationalization as a means of cultivating glocal human resources, students who possess global competencies alongside a sense of local responsibility. While expanding study abroad opportunities, they are also developing community engagement curricula to encourage students to engage with regional problem-solving and social innovation. Through these initiatives, the universities are leveraging internationalization to address the intertwined challenges of globalization, demographic change, and regional sustainability. Their efforts reflect an emerging vision of a multicultural coexistence society, in which global awareness and local engagement are mutually reinforcing.

An Analysis of the Influence of Women's Intrahousehold Decision-Making on Household Expenditure for Primary Education in Malawi

YUDAI Ishii

Education has long been recognized as a cornerstone of human capital development and social progress. In line with this, Goal 4 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to ensure that by 2030, all children, regardless of gender, complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education that leads to effective learning outcomes.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Malawi was the first country to introduce Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994, with the goal of promoting equitable access and providing quality education services. However, ensuring that children remain in school and complete their education continues to pose a major challenge. Although the introduction of FPE led to a sharp rise in enrollment rates, Malawi's retention rate remains among the lowest in the region. Economic constraints are the primary cause of dropout, with nearly half of all children forced to leave school because their families cannot afford tuition-related expenses. Despite the abolition of formal school fees, "hidden costs," such as uniforms, learning materials, PTA contributions, and transportation, remain a substantial burden that hinders school continuation. Under these conditions, a key determinant of children's continued schooling lies in how households allocate their expenditures on children's education. Investment in education is not determined solely by income level but also by who controls household resources and how those resources are distributed. Previous studies have highlighted gendered differences in spending priorities: men tend to allocate part of household income to personal consumption, whereas women are more likely to invest in areas that benefit the entire family, such as food, health, and education. Therefore, the extent to which women participate in intrahousehold decision-making on resource allocation may directly affect private educational spending on children. In this study, intrahousehold decision-making refers to the process through which authority over major household matters, such as education and consumption, is negotiated and determined among members. This process can be conceptualized in three dimensions: first, the "process of power," involving persuasion and negotiation; second, the "outcome of power," concerning who makes the final decision; and third, the "final outcome," reflected in actual expenditures and the division of labor.

Empirical research often examines intrahousehold decision-making from women's perspectives, classifying their involvement as decisions made "individually," "jointly with a spouse or other members," or "not at all." Women in Malawi, however, are known to have relatively low decision-making power within households compared to other parts of southeastern Africa. Of particular interest is the existence of matrilineal kinship systems, where descent is traced through the mother's line. In practice, however, the maternal uncle often holds authority over key decisions, such as marriage arrangements, land use, and children's education, thereby constraining women's autonomy. Moreover, inter-ethnic marriage and population mobility have diversified residential patterns in Malawi, shifting from traditional matrilocal residence to patrilocal and neolocal forms, which in turn have transformed household power structures. Thus, even in settings that

appear female-centered on the surface, patriarchal authority remains deeply embedded, shaping the dynamics of women's intrahousehold decision-making.

Previous studies have typically relied on proxies such as women's income, asset ownership, or access to credit to examine household expenditure on children's education. While these indicators provide insight into women's economic empowerment, they capture only indirect aspects of decision-making authority. Direct analyses of women's actual role in decision-making, and how this interacts with women's background and cultural norms, remain limited. In Malawi, this issue is particularly salient, as matrilineal traditions coexist with patrilocal and neolocal residence practices, producing significant variation in household power relations and gendered bargaining positions. Careful attention to these cultural contexts is therefore essential to understanding how households invest in children's education.

This study investigates the relationship between women's intrahousehold decision-making and household expenditure on children's primary education in Malawi. Specifically, it examines (1) the direct influence of women's intrahousehold decision-making on household expenditure for children's primary education, (2) how this relationship varies by women's background, and (3) how community-level residence norms, matrilocal, patrilocal, and neolocal, shape these relationships. Through this multilayered design, the study seeks to clarify how gendered power relations, embedded within cultural structures, influence household allocation of resources toward children's education. The analysis utilizes data from the Malawi Integrated Household Survey 2019/20 (IHS 2019/20). A two-step Heckman selection model was applied, with school attendance serving as the first-stage selection equation and the amount of private educational expenditure as the second-stage outcome equation, to correct for potential sample selection bias. To account for the hierarchical structure of the data, robust standard errors clustered at the community level were employed. Women's intrahousehold decision-making was measured using a composite index constructed through Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), based on five domains: crop choice, use of agricultural output, property ownership, home gardening, and land parcel sales. This index captures the degree of women's involvement, either independently or jointly, in household decisions in an integrated manner. The analysis first estimated the influence of the women's intrahousehold decision-making index, then introduced interaction terms between women's intrahousehold decision-making and individual characteristics, followed by three-way interactions among women's intrahousehold decision-making, individual characteristics, and residence type. District fixed effects and survey year effects were also controlled for. In addition, the study is grounded in Rational Choice Theory, which assumes that individuals make decisions by weighing potential costs and benefits to maximize their utility under given constraints.

Within households, resource allocation is thus seen as a result of strategic interactions among members who seek to optimize welfare according to their preferences, bargaining positions, and access to information. Applying this framework helps explain how women's intrahousehold decision-making participation influences household expenditure on children's education: when women possess greater autonomy and resources, their choices tend to prioritize long-term, welfare-enhancing investments such as education.

Consequently, Rational Choice Theory provides a useful lens for interpreting how differences in women's agency and bargaining power manifest in household spending behaviors under economic and cultural constraints.

The quantitative analysis revealed that when women were involved, either independently or jointly, in household decision-making, household expenditure on children's primary education increased significantly. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that women tend to allocate resources to areas that promote overall family welfare, such as education and health, more than men do. However, while previous studies have relied primarily on proxy indicators, such as income, asset ownership, or access to credit, this study directly measures women's intrahousehold decision-making involvement, offering a more precise assessment of their influence on household educational spending. The interaction analysis showed that women's intrahousehold decision-making interacted positively with both educational attainment and economic status, significantly increasing household expenditure on children's primary education. The relationship was particularly pronounced among highly educated women and those in economically wealthier households.

From the perspective of the Capability Approach, education and economic resources provide the foundation for women to exercise agency as real freedoms. Educated women possess the knowledge and confidence to recognize the long-term value of education and make informed investment decisions, while economically secure households offer the means to translate these decisions into actual spending. Hence, education and income expand women's empowerment from mere participation in intrahousehold decision-making to substantive freedom accompanied by action.
Furthermore, the three-way interaction analysis demonstrated that the influence of women's intrahousehold decision-making on household expenditure for children's primary education varies by residential patterns and socioeconomic conditions. In matrilocal communities, women's intrahousehold decision-making showed a stronger positive association with household spending on children's primary education, particularly among mothers with primary education, suggesting that matrilocal norms and kinship networks create an environment conducive to women's authority.

Conversely, in patrilocal settings, the interaction with economic status indicated that wealthier households exhibited a stronger link between women's intrahousehold decision-making and household expenditure on children's primary education. This suggests that in contexts where women's authority is culturally constrained, economic resources act as complementary sources of power that enable women to exercise their decision-making in practice.

Overall, the findings indicate that women's empowerment is shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by interactions with cultural and structural contexts. This conclusion supports theoretical arguments that cultural norms can mediate women's bargaining power. Unlike previous studies that have largely addressed this issue conceptually, this study makes an important contribution by empirically demonstrating the relationship between cultural structures, women's intrahousehold decision-making, and household investment in children's primary education.

Facilitating Pre-service Primary Teachers' Change in Views of Student Diversity through Transformative Learning

DENG Yan

With the teacher-dominant and highly competitive exam-oriented and ranking education culture, China initiated its quality-oriented education reform in 1999 (CPCCC & SC, 1999). Teachers are then recognized as facilitators of student development, continuous reflective practitioners, and life-long learner (MOE, 2011), and future teachers need to learn the student-centered approach in their pre-service teacher education (MOE, 2017). Teachers' views of their students are key to student-centered teaching. If teachers rank their students hierarchically, the teaching process is going to be exclusive; while teachers treat students as equal parts with diverse uniqueness in each one, the inclusive classroom can be expected. As an important element of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006), diversity normally refers to students' various cultural backgrounds. For teachers in China, student diversity in the character and academic performance is more relevant. How to view students with diverse traits, academic achievements, and learning pace is likely to predict teachers' choice between teacher-centered and student-centered teaching style.

This study was based on the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997, 1998). As per Mezirow (1997), transformative learning is the process of changing our frame of reference, which includes the dimensions of habits of mind and resulting points of view. Critical reflection is the core of making the learning truly transformative. Therefore, the learning involving elaborating an existing point of view and establishing new points of view does not lead to transformative learning; while critical reflection on the previous misconception brings about transforming our point of view, and critical reflection on our general ethnocentric bias generates the transformation of our habit of mind. Transformative learning is the essence of adult education, in which the educator is a facilitator, not an authority in the student learning process. Mezirow (1998) further discussed that the critical reflection can be the product of a discourse of discussion, or learners' self-insight. Transformative learning is often applied to a cross-cultural context to explain how the obstacles encountered triggered participants' critical reflections on their previous bias towards other cultures. It is highly relevant in teacher education, as critical reflection is an essential part of the professional life of both pre-service and in-service teachers.

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of facilitating future primary teachers' critical reflections on "student diversity" in an English language class. The facilitation was in two steps. The first step was guiding students to think about their diversity after a self-introduction session at the beginning of a new term. Students introduced themselves in the same template of "My name is …", "I am a … person", and "I like…". Based on their accounting, the teacher initiated the discussion on the English word "diversity". The next step was to introduce two contrasting paradigms for viewing students, with the "pyramid model" referring to the hierarchical view of students, and the "dandelion model" representing the equal and diversity view of students. 'The data of this study were from a survey of all students two months later. They are sophomores majoring in primary education and are likely to become teachers in the primary schools after graduation and

obtaining the Teacher Qualification Certificate. With the students' approval, the survey explored their views of students from both the students' perspective and the future teachers' perspective. It also checked the reasons behind any changes or non-change in their views from two perspectives, as well as their acceptance of the hierarchical and diversity models.

The data analysis employed descriptive quantitative methods of frequency, T-test, and chi-square, as well as the qualitative method of thematic analysis. The frequency analysis illustrated that most future teachers view students as diverse and unique from the student perspective. After shifting to the teacher perspective, both the hierarchical and diversity views were traded off by the blended view. Specifically, for those who view students as a hierarchy, some changed to the diversity side, and most moved to a blended view. Half of those for student diversity maintained their stance, and most of the rest moved to a blended view. Their acceptance of the two models of viewing students is moderate. The T-test also showed that the acceptance between those holding different views from both student and teacher perspectives, and changing their views thereafter, is not significantly varied. However, the chi-square analysis evidenced that the views from the student perspective and their view changes are moderately related. The qualitative analysis found that changes or no change of views after switching perspectives was due to critical reflection, as well as individual points of view, social development, and learning from class discussion.

It can be concluded from the findings that switching perspectives effectively changed future teachers' view of students from hierarchical to a more equal way. However, the teacher-centered culture shaped the compromise towards the blended option. Changes in the views of students are not driven by teachers' infused models, but by their own views as students and transformation after switching perspectives. It supported the arguments of student-centered teaching and transformative learning as student transformed their points of view upon self-critical reflection, which was facilitated by the teachers' guidance instead of instruction. The limitation of this study lies in its data source, which was future teachers' self-reports. There might be the possibility of pleasing the teacher by claiming they will be good teachers and treat their future students equally. Nevertheless, this study contributed to the discussion of critical reflection and transformative learning in teacher education.

Redefining "fitting in": Campus-based social capital among non-local, non-Mainland undergraduate students in Hong Kong

GAO Fang & TANG Hei Hang Hayes

The extant literature on the campus adjustment of international university students—defined as those pursuing higher education outside their countries or usual areas of residence—primarily centres on their acculturation experiences. These encompass both psychological and sociocultural dimensions, which are characteristic of South-North mobility (Lipura & Collins, 2020). Empirical studies tend to emphasise the challenges faced by students during their adaptation process, such as language barriers, culture shock, loneliness, and social isolation, while studying and living in the host country or institution. This body of research often reflects an epistemological dominance by Western

cultures and a perception of the superiority of higher education systems in the Global North, approaching westward mobile students through a lens of deficit and Eurocentrism (Heng, 2018; Marginson, 2014; Tran & Pham, 2016). Such deficit-oriented approaches have considerable implications, often resulting in institutional strategies focused on assimilating international students into the host culture. These strategies frequently valorise social networks with domestic students, viewing such relationships as vital sources of social capital that facilitate students' integration into their new academic and sociocultural environments (Kudo et al., 2017; Neri & Ville, 2008; Rienties et al., 2015).

Given these dynamics, a re-evaluation of the concept of "fitting in" within the scholarship on international student experiences is both necessary and timely. Firstly, the vertical institutional structures that dichotomise international and domestic students may obscure the heterogeneity within the international student population, thereby constraining our understanding of campus diversity and its impact on intercultural relationship dynamics (Jones, 2017). Secondly, the concept of social capital itself warrants reconsideration to incorporate the values and strengths inherent in marginalised or non-dominant groups—elements that can positively influence academic achievement and cultural adaptation (Yosso, 2005). Thirdly, current literature often portrays the development of intercultural relationships between domestic and international students as an imposed process on international students, with limited attention to their subjective perceptions and agentic actions.

Employing the concept of campus-based social capital (CBSC), this study investigated how international students pursuing undergraduate degrees in Hong Kong accessed and developed CBSC, and how this process influenced their sense of belonging and overall adjustment within the university environment. The research aimed to address two key questions: 1. What specific forms of CBSC do international students cultivate within the context of an internationalised university environment, such as Hong Kong? 2. How does the accumulation of CBSC affect their experiences in navigating key challenges in global higher education—such as academic integration, cultural adaptation, and access to resources—within Hong Kong's socio-cultural landscape?

In this study, CBSC refers to the resources, opportunities, privileges, and services generated through durable relationships and networks with university personnel (faculty and staff) and peers within academic programmes, campus organisations, and residence halls. These resources are vital for facilitating international students' adjustment and persistence, as they can be accessed as needed (Gao, 2025; Waters & Leung, 2013). Moving beyond a deficit paradigm, an assets-based approach emphasises that: a) interactions with faculty outside formal classes and engagement with cultural and academic diversity in classroom settings help integrate students into the institutional environment and foster campus involvement (Glass & Gesing, 2018); b) positive intergroup friendships on campus diversify international students' social networks and contribute to their academic and career aspirations (Moon & Shin, 2019); and c) international students often find it easier to adapt when they form friendships with co-national peers (Gao, 2025). For internationally mobile students, CBSC in transnational social spaces encompasses (1) trust, mutual obligations, norms, and expectations; (2)

information and knowledge exchange; and (3) social and emotional support (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

This study employed an interview-based qualitative approach to gain in-depth insights into the personal experiences, perceptions, and perspectives of 20 international undergraduate students studying in Hong Kong. Participants represented diverse backgrounds, including four students each from Myanmar, Pakistan, and Tanzania; three from India; two from Kazakhstan; and the remaining from Kyrgyzstan, Rwanda, and the United Kingdom, reflecting the BRI-driven source markets. In-depth interviews with the participants explored the broader and more diffuse social relationships on campus that may have influenced their academic and sociocultural adjustment. During the analysis of the interview data, the role of peers emerged as particularly salient when compared with faculty and staff, as all participants identified their peers as a major source of information, as well as providing academic and emotional support. The study revealed that participants' peer networks on campus were diverse, involving classmates, roommates, hallmates, and members of student clubs. However, these networks predominantly consisted of other international students (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Moon & Shin, 2019). The findings align with prior research highlighting the limited friendships between Mainland Chinese students and local students (Ma & Holford, 2024; Tian, 2019; Xu, 2015).

In this study, such relationships—often initiated through intercultural encounters with local and Mainland students—tended to occur incidentally and remained superficial, with limited prospects for deeper engagement. This affirmed the existence of a campus divide experienced by international students in this study and carries significant implications for their navigation of campus diversity. This study offers a caution against overly simplistic interpretations of social capital effects that focus solely on ties with domestic students. Unlike prior research emphasising the positive impact of international-domestic networks (Glass et al., 2017; Neri & Ville, 2008), this study highlights the dynamic interplay between supply and demand in the formation of social networks. While international students may initially face difficulties engaging with dominant local and Mainland student groups, over time they can develop their own transnational niches. These findings challenge narrow conceptualisations of social capital (Yosso, 2005) and critique the assimilationist perspective on integration prevalent in the literature, which attributes international students' low sense of belonging to deficiencies in their academic, cultural, or linguistic abilities (Andrade, 2006). Instead, this research advocates for a more inclusive approach that recognises students' agency in constructing their own pathways to integration and celebrates diversity within institutional contexts (Gao, 2025; Marginson, 2014; Tran & Vu, 2018).

Trapped by Structure, Beset by Conflicts: An Empirical Study of Identity, Practice, and Agency of Children's Reading Promoters in China move

SONG Yurui & DU Xiaoxin

Introduction

In China, National Reading as a 'reading for all' initiative has been elevated to a national development strategy since 2014, as it has been included in the Government Work

Report for ten consecutive years. The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 further emphasized the need to "promote reading nationwide and develop a society dedicated to reading." In pursuit of this objective, a diverse body of reading promoters has emerged as the primary driving force. Unlike many Western models countries, which tend to rely on social organizations and indirect state support, China has established a government-led policy framework. This framework involves multiple stakeholders and forms a complete policy chain, from central top-level design and ministerial coordination to local implementation, financial guarantees, and legal support. While policy directives assign clear roles—the Publicity Department setting the direction, the Ministry of Education integrating reading into schools, other ministries funding projects and embedding reading spaces into public services, and local governments tailoring implementation—within a seemingly cohesive, multi-tiered system, the frontline practices of reading promoters are often overlooked.

Existing research on reading promotion in China has mostly served the fields of library science and the publishing industry. The study of reading promoters as primary subjects remains relatively weak and has not yet formed an independent research area. Firstly, their composition is complex in China, extending beyond libraries or non-profit organizations. Yet, no study has provided a clear description of their profile. Individual practices of promoters working outside traditional institutional frameworks have been largely ignored. Moreover, the external conditions that shape their practice, and the underlying mechanisms behind the challenges they face, have not been clearly researched. Acknowledging the foundational role of reading in early child development, this study focuses on children's reading promoters in China (hereinafter referred to as 'reading promoters' or 'promoters').

This study addresses three research questions: it first identifies the key promoters of children's reading in China; then examines how structural rules and resources shape their practices and challenges; and finally explores how they navigate and exert agency within these constraints. This study is theoretically grounded in Giddens' Structuration Theory and the Institutional Logics framework. Structuration theory helps examine how reading promoters, as agents, interact with structural rules and resources, particularly under the dominant public-service logic. Building on this, the institutional logics framework helps systematically uncover the mechanisms behind their challenges and reveals whether promoters can sustain professional practices within such a complex institutional environment. By examining reading promoters, this study anchors reading promotion within educational scholarship, as it explores the cultivation of reading as a fundamental objective of educational development.

Method

This empirical study was conducted in Shenzhen. This city is chosen as the primary site for two reasons. First, the municipal government has placed children's reading in the top-level design of the public cultural service system and has issued a set of local policies to build a "City of Libraries," supported by funding and local legislation. These policies provide clear rules and resources and create an arena where multiple institutional logics meet. Second, Shenzhen has a comparatively mature ecosystem for reading promotion:

China's first association of reading promoters was founded in the city, and a wide range of reading-promotion organizations operate here. As such, the site could reveal how interactions among institutional logics shape and constrain frontline promoters' agency. Given Shenzhen's robust policy-driven "City of Libraries" initiative and its concentrated presence of NGOs, the city serves as a pioneering case. If even such a well-supported context faces challenges, it is likely that these issues are more pronounced in other regions with less institutional backing. This study used mixed methods, based on our fieldwork in 2025, to triangulate the data and ensure its validity. First, an extensive document review (800+ items) provided established facts and institutional context. Second, a questionnaire survey (n=224) mapped the basic profile of reading promoters and informed the qualitative sampling frame. Third, with permission, non-participatory observation was conducted of more than 20 activities. Fourth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 17 reading promoters, including kindergarten teachers, NGO leaders, community and independent reading promoters etc. Fifth, an online focus group engaged 30 participants to explore shared challenges and cross-case variation. Additionally, site visits were made to 12 district libraries and above to document spatial, organizational, and service features relevant to children's reading.

Findings

1. The Agents:

A Profile of Children's Reading Promoters This study defines children's reading promoters as individuals who recognize the benefits of reading for young age groups and commit time and effort to disseminating those benefits. According to our survey, contrary to the common perception that children's reading promoters are confined to book-related institutions such as libraries or publishers, this study finds that children's reading promoters in China are a complex group spanning the public, non-profit, commercial, and freelance sectors. Our research captures this spectrum, spanning public-sector librarians and educators who deliver universal services; non-profit organizations focused on advocacy and resource provision for underserved communities; commercial providers offering market-driven specialized courses; and grassroots actors such as therapists and freelance tutors who deliver tailored, small-scale programs through family book clubs and other adaptive formats. Most promoters have limited professional experience and a dominant part-time work model. While these groups operate within distinct institutional and functional contexts, their work is often informed by a shared philosophy of reading. Most participants view reading as a holistic developmental practice connecting texts to self, others, and the world. However, these views often stand in tension with a performance-driven education system that prioritizes speed, standardization, and measurable outcomes.

2. Trapped by Structure:

The Dominance of Public-Service Logic Reading promotion qualifies as a public service because it cultivates foundational literacy, fosters social inclusion, and generates positive externalities that benefit society as a whole—functions that market mechanisms alone cannot adequately fulfill. However, our findings reveal that this public-service logic constrains promoters through a set of rules: regulative rules tie services to earmarked funding and coverage quotas, limiting professional autonomy; normative rules prioritize standardization and risk control, casting promoters as instructors rather than co-

designers; and interpretive rules frame reading as a tool for national quality, favoring visible, quantifiable events over situated design. This constraining set of rules is further solidified by the way resources are structured and allocated within the same logic. First, project-based funding and venue allocation—often tied to shifting tender cycles—confine promoters to public sites where resources are intermittent and passively administered. Second, human resources, particularly in public libraries, depend heavily on volunteers and a small core of dedicated professionals. Third, extracurricular reading suffers from a lack of social legitimacy, as it competes with heavy schoolwork, early academic drills, and pervasive screen use for children's time and attention.

3. Beset by Conflicts: Clashes of Institutional Logics

A. Public-service logic vs. professional logic

This conflict emerges when the professional values of promoters clash with the administrative imperatives of the public-service logic. First, the professional pursuit of pedagogical quality is subordinated to the public-service logic's demand for quantifiable indicators. Public partners, such as community centers or local bureaus, compel collaborating promoters from the non-profit sector and targeted services to adopt standardized and conservative activity templates to fulfill their administrative aims, for example, the amount of reading activities required by the higher level of government. This institutional pressure curtails professional autonomy, forcing a compromise that favors superficial metrics over substantive and educative engagement. Second, a fundamental misalignment arises from the systemic devaluation of reading promotion as a specialized field. Key administrative decision-makers who control resource allocation often perceive the work as unskilled labor rather than an professional intervention. This mindset directly obstructs funding and legitimization, trapping non-profit sector promoters in a paradox: their labor is expected as a public good but denied support as a professional service. Finally, the professional drive for systemic interventions clashes with structural barriers inherent in the public-service logic. This logic manifests as fragmented governance; for instance, accountability for a holistic 0-6 (years old) early reading program is divided across disparate bureaus such as Health, Education, and the Women's Federation. Moreover, public institutions often remain risk-averse, offering only nominal endorsements rather than integrated partnerships. This public-service climate neutralizes the capacity of expert organizations and individuals to implement innovative practices.

B. Public-service logic vs. Family logic

The public-service logic, which envisions universal access and relies on parental co-production, collides with the stratified and utilitarian realities of family logics. First, a conflict over reading's core value emerges. The dominant family logic often frames reading through a narrow, utilitarian lens, prioritizing instrumental academic outcomes. This directly opposes the public-service goal of cultivating reading as a lifelong practice to improve national quality. Second, this conflict extends to perceived roles. While the public-service logic requires parental co-production which policy refers to as a "reading family", promoters find this ideal widely displaced by a "custodial" family logic. Many parents treat public reading activities as free childcare, transferring educational responsibility to the promoter and neutralizing the activity's pedagogical intent. Finally, the public-service ideal of equity is undermined by a structural failure. Promoters,

particularly from public libraries and non-profit sectors, uphold the public-service ideal of reading as a tool for social equity. Yet they observe that universal services are disproportionately captured by families already possessing high cultural capital. Disadvantaged groups remain hard to reach, creating a Matthew Effect. The public-service system thus inadvertently reinforces the social inequalities it officially aims to mitigate.

C. Public-Service logic vs. Market logic

This conflict creates a contradiction over the valorization of professional labor, which manifests differently across promoter groups. Primarily, the public-service logic's emphasis on universal access frames reading as a moral public good, systemically devaluing its economic worth. This creates a moral economy trap that impacts many promoters from non-profit sectors and targeted service, who report financial precarity and are forced to self-fund. These commercial promoters face a market-positioning dilemma: they are squeezed between an unsustainable low-price model (due to the public's expectation of free services) and a high-price model that transforms reading from a public good into an exclusive privilege based on family income. In response, impacted promoters rely on a robust affective economy for sustainability. They actively substitute absent financial compensation with high-value moral and emotional rewards—such as witnessing children's growth and personal fulfillment—to balance the perceived value inequity. However, this reliance on affective labor can be fragile; as "working for love" proves unsustainable, it frequently leads to professional burnout and the loss of experienced promoters. Furthermore, promoters exhibit agency by strategically employing market mechanisms to solve public-service logic's drawbacks, which yields a complex outcome. On the one hand, they strategically use price as a non-profit tool to secure user commitment. For example, to solve public-service logic's inefficiencies like high no-show rates for free public activities, some promoters introduced nominal fees. On the other hand, when promoters from non-profit and commercial actors employ market logic to secure financial viability such as seeking corporate funding, it generates new collisions with funder demands, forcing a compromise on their pedagogical mission.

Conclusion

This study addresses a significant gap by shifting focus from China's macro-policy to the micro-practices of its frontline reading promoters. We respond to our research questions by first providing a typology of promoters, then demonstrating how their practice is constrained by a dominant, top-down public-service logic that manifests as specific rules and resources. This dominant logic generates three key sites of conflict—clashing with professional, family, and market logics. Faced with these conflicts, promoters exercise a bounded agency. Under immense structural constraints, this agency is channeled into micro-level adaptation and survival rather than systemic transformation, which threatens the long-term sustainability of their practice. This study provides a critical bottom-up analysis of China's state-led cultural policy. For comparative education, this study serves as a compelling non-Western case study with a Chinese voice. It alerts policymakers to the unintended consequences of top-down models that devalue frontline professional labor. We also argue that reading promotion acts as a microcosm for the inherent contradictions within China's contemporary public service governance.

Attracting Global Talent: How the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme Can Advance Hong Kong's Status as a Higher Education Hub

Ewan WRIGHT

Background

The Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS) is a flagship higher education hub policy designed to attract the "best and brightest" students globally to pursue a PhD at Hong Kong's universities. Established in 2009 by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong, the HKPFS is open to both local and non-local students admitted to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programme at one of Hong Kong's eight publicly funded universities. For the 2026/27 academic year, the HKPFS offers a globally competitive annual stipend of HK$340,800 (approximately US$43,690) and a conference and research-related travel allowance of HK$14,200 (approximately US$1,820) per year for 400 new students (University Grants Committee, 2025). Before this study, no empirical research had examined any aspect of the HKPFS, despite its strategic importance in achieving multiple policy goals, such as developing the higher education sector in Hong Kong, enhancing the global standing of Hong Kong's universities, strengthening the talent pool within the labour force, and bolstering Hong Kong's image as an international city. This lack of research is particularly significant as student mobility is currently in a state of "flux", with dominant flows of students to the West being destabilised (Brooks & Waters, 2022; de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Tight, 2022). East Asian higher education, particularly in China, has demonstrated considerable growth in research capacity (Marginson, 2022; Marginson & Xu, 2023), and universities in the region are recruiting increasing numbers of mobile doctoral students (Dai et al., 2025), both intra-regionally (e.g., Wei, 2024) and inter-regionally (e.g., Mulvey, 2023). Recent political developments in Western countries may accelerate this trend, as geopolitics and domestic concerns have led to a backlash against international student recruitment (Fieldhouse & Mallapaty, 2025; Marginson, 2025). Against this backdrop, the present study offers the first empirical research project on non-local HKPFS awardees, while also advancing knowledge of Hong Kong as a PhD destination for mobile students. The research identified the backgrounds of non-local HKPFS awardees, their reasons for choosing to pursue a PhD at Hong Kong's universities, their academic and social experiences in Hong Kong, and their post-graduation career prospects.

Methods

The study employed a three-phase sequential mixed-methods research design. Phase one comprised a questionnaire survey (n=253) to investigate the backgrounds of non-local HKPFS awardees, their motivations to pursue a PhD in Hong Kong, their academic and social experiences as PhD students, and their post-PhD career plans. In phase two, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with a subset of survey respondents (n=50) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their backgrounds, motivations, experiences, and career intentions. Phase three involved in-depth interviews with HKPFS graduates (n=50) to explore how obtaining a PhD in Hong Kong shapes career opportunities and outcomes in the longer term. In addition, the research team conducted a smaller-scale supplementary project involving international PhD students at a leading university in the United Kingdom as an international comparative case.

Findings

First, the research identified the profile of HKPFS awardees. The survey revealed that the HKPFS attracts talented PhD students from around the world: the sample included 43 nationalities, with over half from outside the Chinese Mainland. Nearly half (47.8%) of the HKPFS awardees held master's degrees from top-100 globally ranked universities, a proportion similar to the international PhD students at the United Kingdom-based comparison university in this research (46.7%). The primary motivator for choosing Hong Kong was the quality of its universities, particularly their internationally recognised faculty. Interviews indicated that most students were competitive PhD applicants globally, often holding offers from universities worldwide. For Chinese Mainland students, Hong Kong was frequently a first choice due to the high regard for its universities, proximity, safety, and geopolitical considerations. For others, Hong Kong was sometimes a "less obvious" choice compared to Western higher education systems or local universities in their home countries. Conversely, the United Kingdom-based PhD students often regarded their university as a more well-established PhD destination. Awareness of PhD opportunities in Hong Kong often came through global networks, including via professors, peers, and institutional collaborations. The HKPFS could play a decisive role, as the scholarship often exceeds what is offered by other universities globally, sometimes changing the students' trajectory in favour of Hong Kong.

Second, the research examined HKPFS awardees' academic and social experiences during their PhD studies. The survey highlighted their academic productivity: 70.4% had presented at an international conference, 56.5% had published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, and 44.3% had published in high-impact SSCI/SCI-indexed journals. Their academic outputs surpassed those of the United Kingdom-based international PhD students in all measured categories apart from local conference presentations. Interviewees considered the quality of academic training to be equivalent to leading universities in the West, providing opportunities to develop academic skills and social networks. The most impactful academic training often involved overseas activities, including fieldwork, conferences, and study abroad programmes. However, the HKPFS awardees also described Hong Kong's universities as having a fast-paced, competitive academic culture. While this environment can drive productivity for some students, others reported that it places considerable pressure on them, which can adversely affect research quality, academic development, and well-being. Moreover, many interviewees felt that the social aspect of their PhD experience was "underdeveloped", with limited integration into university student communities and local society. The United Kingdom-based international PhD interviewees were more likely to report positive social experiences, often highlighting the role of university- and student-organised events in enabling the development of social networks, cross-cultural learning, and a sense of belonging.

Third, the research identified the career aspirations and outcomes of HKPFS awardees. Most survey participants (76.6%) intended to pursue academic careers, with 39.5% specifically aiming to work in universities in Hong Kong. The interviews revealed a perception that only the most competitive graduates could secure academic positions within Hong Kong's universities, due to a preference for recruiting academics from leading universities globally over their own graduates. This required a strong portfolio of

publications, academic experiences at elite universities during the PhD, and a robust network. Their outlook contrasted with the United Kingdom-based PhD students, who were more likely to perceive that their PhD degree was highly regarded by universities domestically. However, the HKPFS awardees perceived significant academic job prospects in higher education systems worldwide. A Hong Kong PhD was believed to serve as a springboard for academic careers on returning to home countries or through further mobility, especially in the Chinese Mainland and across Asia. Overall, 68.0% of Hong Kong PhD graduates interviewed were working in academia worldwide, yet only 14% were working within Hong Kong's universities.

Discussion and Policy Recommendations

The findings demonstrate that, through the HKPFS, Hong Kong's universities are attracting talented PhD students from around the world, providing them with high-quality academic training, and preparing them for academic careers globally. The research indicates, therefore, that the HKPDS is successfully supporting the ambitions of the Hong Kong government to develop a hub for higher education. Nonetheless, the findings also highlight key areas where targeted policy enhancements could further strengthen the HKPFS and reinforce Hong Kong's position as a higher education hub.

First, to increase awareness of Hong Kong as a world-class PhD destination, revitalising the online promotion of the HKPFS is essential. Effective online outreach is crucial for attracting prospective students who may lack existing connections to Hong Kong's universities. It is therefore recommended that the HKPFS website be comprehensively updated and that social media platforms be utilised more strategically in order to reach a wider global audience of talented students. Promotional messaging should emphasise both the world-class calibre of Hong Kong's universities and the highly competitive terms of the HKPFS award. In addition, peer networks play a significant role in disseminating information about PhD opportunities. It would thus be valuable to establish "HKPFS Ambassador" roles, encouraging current and former awardees to actively promote the scheme within their home and international communities.

Second, in terms of supporting high-quality academic and social experiences during the PhD, it is recommended that the conference and research-related travel allowance be reviewed and, where feasible, increased to further enhance the quality and outcomes of doctoral training. Nevertheless, care should be taken to avoid linking additional funding too rigidly to academic output requirements, so as not to exacerbate pressures on students. Equally important is the need to strengthen the social dimension of the PhD experience, particularly for non-local students, to foster a cohesive and supportive community. The formal establishment of an "HKPFS Student Association" could connect awardees across universities, disciplines, and cohorts, thereby promoting social networking, cross-cultural exchange, and a greater sense of belonging.

Third, to promote longer-term contributions to Hong Kong after the PhD, it is crucial to enhance both academic career guidance and employment opportunities within the territory. More targeted career support should be provided to HKPFS awardees, including advice on how best to leverage the fellowship for their academic development.

Furthermore, Hong Kong's universities could be more open to employing HKPFS graduates in post-doctoral and assistant professor positions, particularly through cross-institutional recruitment initiatives.

Finally, establishing an "HKPFS Alumni Association" would serve to strengthen long-term connections with graduates, regardless of whether they remain in Hong Kong or pursue careers abroad. Such an association would provide a platform for promoting the HKPFS to prospective students, supporting current awardees, and facilitating networking, research collaboration, and ongoing career development among alumni.

Rethinking Rang and Burang: A Confucian Perspective on Education and Disagreement

TAO Junbo Max

The Confucian maxim "當仁不讓於師" (literally translated, "when one comes with benevolence, one should not yield even to one's teacher") in Analects 15.36 has long resonated within Chinese educational discourse. Traditionally, it is interpreted to mean that students, when faced with the moral imperative of cultivating and practicing benevolence, should not defer—even to their teachers. The key term "burang" (不讓) here is seen as "not yield or defer (in a human and polite manner)". This reading has led some scholars to view the phrase as a powerful endorsement of intellectual independence, critical thinking, and the courage to challenge authority and opponents.

In this light, Confucius is seen as encouraging students to uphold their views even in the face of hierarchical relationships and dominant doctrines, a principle that can be applied to modern academic debates and pedagogical interactions. For instance, the scholarly disagreement between Lu Kanru 陸侃如 and Hu Shi 胡適 on the interpretation of the Chu Ci 楚辭 is cited as an example of Confucian-inspired intellectual engagement in which dissent is not only permitted but valorized, in line with the principle expressed in Analects 15.36. However, this interpretation appears to stand in tension with the Confucian emphasis on "avoiding conflict" (buzheng, 不爭). Avoiding conflict is not only the core value of practicing deference, according to Lunyu Zhushu 論語註疏 4.13, but also a major moral reasoning of ritual (li, 禮), modesty (qian, 謙), harmony and diversity (he'erbutong, 和而不同), and even the hierarchical relationship of teacher-student (shisheng, 師生). Hence, the tension has prompted alternative readings that seek to soften the confrontational implications of burang. Zhu Xi 朱熹, for example, argued that the capacity for benevolence "is innate and must be cultivated individually (and internally)" (人所自有而自為之), suggesting that cultivating (and practicing) benevolence does not require refuting different opinions or imposing one's views on others, and thus rendering the notion of yielding irrelevant (非有爭也，何遜之有). Qian Mu 錢穆 offers a different reinterpretation, suggesting that the term "shi" (師) in the context of Analects 15.36 does not refer to a teacher but rather to a societal leader (xunzhong, 訓眾). In his view, the phrase calls for individuals to take moral initiative in guiding the public (or the commoners), rather than challenging pedagogical authority.

Both interpretations preserve the Confucian tradition of a commitment to ritual propriety and social harmony, resisting the notion that students should confront or contradict their teachers. Here, this article contends that both traditional and alternative readings fail to deeply explore the complexity of the Confucian concept of "rang" (讓) and its implications for educational theory. The term "rang" in Confucian discourse is not merely a matter of modesty or politeness—it reflects a nuanced ethical stance that balances self-cultivation with relational awareness.

This article aims to reconstruct a more sophisticated Confucian perspective on education and disagreement based on a deeper investigation into the semantics and textual patterns behind rang and burang so as to offer valuable insights into the dynamics of moral agency, authority, and dialogues in educational contexts. Rather than viewing burang in the frameworks of existing interpretations, this article proposes its layered meanings and philosophical significance by employing the approach of a two-pronged, multi-level textual analysis.

The study focuses on two categories of textual evidence. The first relates to the contextual meanings of the phrase "當仁不讓於師" within Analects 15.36 and involves later scholars' receptions and reflections across different historical periods. By examining quotations, commentaries, and interpretations from the Han, Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the study traces how later scholars with varying philosophical commitments and cultural backgrounds have understood and rearticulated the phrase. This diachronic survey helps identify common themes, interpretive shifts, and the broader intellectual currents that shaped Confucian educational thought.

The second concentrates on the concept of "ren" (仁) central to Confucian teachings—although it is commonly translated as "benevolence" or "humaneness", it is notoriously difficult to define even within the context of Analects. In the Analects alone, there are at least seven instances where disciples ask Confucius about the meaning of "ren" (see Analects 6.22, 12.1–3, 12.22, 13.19, and 17.6), and each receives a distinct answer tailored to disciples' various character and circumstances. This suggests that "ren" is not a dogmatic doctrine followed uniformly by all of Confucius' students but a more flexible, diverse concept that adapts to individual dispositions and social roles.

By analyzing these dialogues, the study explores the subjective and pluralistic nature of "ren", and how this complexity informs the interpretation of "burang". If each student understands "ren" differently, then the imperative to act without yielding must also be understood in relation to their unique moral perspective and developmental stage. Through this multi-level textual analysis, this article argues that the maxim "當仁不讓於師" should not be read as a simple endorsement of student independence. Instead, it reflects the in-depth Confucian tradition of a commitment to moral pluralism, moral particularism, pedagogical flexibility, and most importantly, the cultivation and intellectual exchange of independent yet relationally grounded individuals.

Confucian education, in this light, is not about transmitting fixed doctrines or enforcing uniform standards, but about guiding students to discover their own ethical and

intellectual paths while maintaining respect for others' perspectives. This approach is evident in Confucius's treatment of his disciples: he never demanded that Zilu 子路 or Zigong 子貢 or even Zaiyu 宰予 should emulate his favorite student Yan Hui 顏回, but instead offered personalized reflections on each student's strengths and weaknesses. The diversity of the later Confucian schools, including the so-called "Eight Schools of Confucianism" (孔門八派) further illustrates the openness of Confucian tradition to interpretive plurality and educational diversity. This reexamination also sheds new light on internal Confucian debates, such as the well-known dispute between Mencius and Xunzi.

Rather than viewing Xunzi's critiques of Mencius in Xunzi ch. 6 and ch. 23 as wholesale rejections, this article suggests that Xunzi offered alternative frameworks for reflecting sage king politics and humanity, inviting scholars to choose rather than conform. His writings demonstrate a nuanced engagement with Mencius' thought, challenging dogmatism, blind obedience, and misinterpretation, and advocating for intellectual discernment and prudent reexamination. It means that Xunzi did not break with other Confucian scholars but rather attempted to refine and reinforce the Confucian tradition in his own way. In this sense, the Confucian tradition itself models a form of respectful disagreement and philosophical experimentation (such as reframing the proposed concept of ren from different individuals' perspectives) that can inform contemporary educational practices.

Finally, by revisiting "當仁不讓於師", this article expects to contribute to a more nuanced and adaptable understanding of Confucian educational thought. It underscores that the Confucian perspective on education and disagreement offers a valuable resource for addressing modern dilemmas in education, ethics, and cross-cultural communication. In an era marked by ideological polarization and uncertainty, the Confucian emphasis on personalized moral cultivation, respectful engagement, and ideological pluralism provides a compelling framework from the Chinese and Eastern Asian cultural contexts for rethinking the roles of authority, student independence, critical thinking, intellectual collaboration and exchange, and development of personality within the classroom and the broad academia.

Navigating Chinese and Euro-American Academia: A Case Study of Scholar Li Zehou

SHEN Yuting

This study analyzes how Li Zehou navigate Chinese and Euro-American academia through his perceptions and practices on researchers and research. Li Zehou (1930–2021) was a Chinese philosopher who received his education locally, yet exerted a considerable influence both domestically and internationally. From a meta-research standpoint, Li Zehou encountered epistemic tensions among Chinese, Western , and Marxist traditions, yet ultimately produced creative scholarship. His notion of "transformative creation" is both a framework for China's modernization and a reflection of his own intellectual journey (Yang, 2016). Scholars have long critiqued global

knowledge asymmetries rooted in colonial and imperial histories, which persist in contemporary academia (Altbach, 1987).

The United States, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe play a dominant role in shaping global knowledge production and dissemination. The global majority—comprising Indigenous, African, Asian, and Latin American populations, who make up about 85 percent of the world's population (Campbell-Stephens, 2021)—are often compelled to adhere to Euro-American academic paradigms. This hegemony creates a disjuncture: global discourses do not well align with local priorities, generating epistemic tensions in non-Euro-American contexts (Ahmad, 2018).

Since the late nineteenth century, Chinese scholars in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) have grappled with the epistemic tensions when engaging Euro-American academia. In essence, HSS subjects navigate multiple paradigms and diverse knowledge, which are often deeply rooted in indigenous and local contexts (Yang, 2014). For contemporary Chinese HSS scholars who are engaging with the global academia, there emerge epistemic tensions in 'language (using local languages vs. publishing in English to reach global audience), theoretical frameworks (applying indigenous ideas vs. borrowing Western theories) and research methodology (using traditional methods rooted in local cultural practices vs. following scientific methods favored in Western academia)' (Shen et al., 2024, p.13). At the heart of epistemic tensions lies the philosophical question of ontology—how we understand the nature of being and existence. Li Zehou thus serves as an illustrative example of navigating Chinese and Euro-American academia.

This paper firstly highlights that Li Zehou's educational and academic trajectories are characterized by persistent epistemic struggles between Chinese, Western and Marxist traditions. Born in 1930, Li came of age in a period when the abolition of the imperial examination system and the introduction of Western-style institutions had already redefined China's educational and epistemic landscape (Yuan et al., 1904; Xiong, 1983). This reform compelled scholars to grapple with how to preserve Chinese traditions while adapting to Euro-American academic paradigms (Guan, 2017). Entering university in the early years of the People's Republic of China. Li was educated in an academic environment where Marxist philosophy served as the foundation for intellectual inquiry and political legitimacy. Yet Li did not remain confined within ideological orthodoxy. During his academic development, he engaged deeply with Marxist concepts such as praxis, historical development, and the interplay between material conditions and human consciousness, while also exploring Chinese cultural traditions and Western philosophy, particularly Confucian ethics and Kantian aesthetics (Yang, 2016).

Second, Li Zehou's views on researchers and research reflects his intellectual life at the dynamic crossroads of Chinese and Euro-American academia. He distinguished between intellectuals and academics, noting that after the 1990s, specialized academics became predominant while broad-minded thinkers receded (Li, 2000). Li identified more with the latter, functioning as an independent thinker during periods when higher education was less institutionalized. He summarized: "My philosophy is neither detached speculation nor a meticulous inquiry into specialized topics; rather, it is the product of interactions

and clashes among various new and old ideas, forces, and issues within a specific era and broader social context (Li, 2003, p.62)". Li's research methods also integrated Chinese and Western approaches. He argued that, unlike Western analytical and abstract thinking, Chinese thought seeks truth through intuitive understanding of specific, concrete phenomena (Yang, 2016). Although he was attentive to scientific and analytical methods early on, he ultimately favored a more integrative, intuitive approach (Li, 2002). His research style reflected the Chinese literati tradition, emphasizing broad reflection and cultural depth over technical specialization.

Third, Li Zehou's ontology offers an illustrative example of dealing with epistemic struggles. Unlike Western-centric ontologies that emphasize abstract metaphysics or rational cognition—such as Aristotle's search for universal categories or Descartes' cogito—Li proposed anthropological-historical ontology and "emotion as substance (qing benti, 情本体)". In this view, being is relational and historical, shaped by collective experience, ritual, and aesthetic cultivation. He argued that human existence is fundamentally shaped by sedimented emotional experiences across generations, crystallized into ethical–aesthetic patterns (Li, 2019). For Li, ontology was inseparable from practice, especially in education. Li (2023) foresaw education, which is dedicated to understanding and shaping human growth and development, as the central discipline of the twenty-first century. His educational philosophy stressed embodied learning through aesthetic education, regarded classical texts as vital sources of emotional experience, and prioritized the cultivation of moral character (Li, 2023). Li Zehou's navigation between Chinese and Euro-American academia, exemplified by his transformative creation scholarship, offers vital insights into resolving epistemic tensions in philosophy and education.

By foregrounding emotion, history, and practice in his ontology, his work challenges dominant Western paradigms, integrates diverse epistemic resources, and enriches comparative scholarship. His educational vision points the way toward a more holistic and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Mainland doctoral students' avoidance of conflict with parents: Filial piety, gendered expectations, and cross-generational ideological differences

GUO Yingda

Introduction

My research explores how the gendered experiences of Mainland Chinese doctoral students in Hong Kong shape their perceptions of familial relationships. My study highlights the impact of intersectional identities on lived experience through in-depth, one-on-one, and semi-structured interviews with single students, coupled students, and parent doctoral students. A key finding is that nearly all single and non-heterosexual participants in closeted relationships reported a lack of direct conflict with their families, reflecting the influence of deeply embedded Chinese socio-cultural norms in adult children and parent relationships.

Background Literature

The primary goal of my presentation is to critically examine the diverse strategies and emotional responses of my participants as they navigate familial relationship pressures. This includes analyzing the collective avoidance of conflict in response to varying levels of relationship pressure from their parents. The ongoing challenge of managing parental expectations is closely tied to the "leftover women" stigma which single Mainland women doctoral students face. In Mainland China, "leftover women" refers to single, highly educated women in their late 20s or older, a term that carries significant cultural stigma (Li, 2015). The nationalistic agenda in Mainland China plays a role in this societal prejudice, with the government's emphasis on marriage, family, and childbirth as part of a broader strategy to address declining birthrates and promote social stability. In addition, Confucian values, which prioritize collective harmony over individual pursuits, place much pressure on women to prioritize marriage over their academic and career goals (Li, 2023). Women doctoral students who challenge, delay, or resist heterosexual marriage, particularly those with alternative life choices, are often seen as a threat to social order. Mainstream media, such as Let's Get Married(2014) and If You Are the One (2015), also perpetuate these sexist norms by positioning marriage as the ultimate goal for all women and turning single, highly educated women into jokes. Beyond the "leftover women" stigma, studies on Chinese sexual minority stress emphasize the additional complexity that my non-heterosexual participants face, particularly under the influence of filial piety . Pu and Xu (2024) found that sexual minority women who strongly resonate with Confucian values and have higher levels of internalized homophobia are more likely to desire having their own children. A survey by Xu et al. (2022) further corroborated this, indicating that Chinese sexual minorities with stronger adherence to Confucianism and greater stigma are more likely to feel compelled to marry than those who don't. These studies suggest that Confucian values put pressure on Chinese sexual minorities to conform to traditional norms and to suppress their own desires. In addition, research by Hildebrandt (2019) found that many Chinese sexual minorities experience parental insistence on marriage and childbearing, with parents disapproving or lacking understanding of their adult children's sexual orientation. These studies underscore the continued strength of filial piety, even among marginalized groups, influencing how Chinese sexual minorities navigate their family dynamics.

Conceptual Frameworks

Together, the "leftover women" stigma and the influence of Confucianism and filial piety help shape ongoing social pressures faced by marginalized individuals in Mainland society. Using intersectionality (Hooks, 2000; McCall, 2005) as a conceptual framework, my presentation will examine how the intersection of various identities, such as gender, age, regional culture, and family social-economic background, influences the experiences of my participants. Additionally, I will use the concept of Confucian patriarchy to explore how Chinese patriarchy, shaped by Confucianism (e.g., the subordination of women's roles, filial piety, and collectivism), affects the ways women and sexual minority participants navigate parental relationships.

Main Findings

My presentation will mainly focus on the varying levels of familial relationship pressure faced by my participants, shaped by their intersectional identities and their diverse

strategies for avoiding family conflict. Thematic analysis of interviews with 22 participants (15 heterosexual doctoral students and 7 sexual minorities, of which 3 are single and 4 are in closeted same-sex relationships) reveals that while marriage was a common topic of discussion with parents, the intensity of the pressure differed. Men in their early to late 20s reported minimal familial pressure, in contrast to their women peers, particularly those from more conservative regions. Women in their early to mid-30s faced the most intense relationship pressure. Although two men participants in their 30s also faced pressure, with one whose family expected him to marry within the year and another whose mother questioned his lack of a heterosexual relationship, their doctoral degrees were not viewed as disadvantages in the heteronormative dating market. On the other hand, some highly educated women doctoral students were seen by their non-academic relatives as facing challenges in the dating world due to their advanced degrees. My participants' strategies for managing familial relationship pressure fall into five categories: passive acceptance, strategic communication, humor as a distraction, using distance and doctoral studies as excuses, and direct refusal. The majority of my participants engaged in strategic communication, such as using debates or explanations to educate their parents on modern perspectives on marriage and relationships comparing to the different dating norms back in the old days. Some participants used their physical distance from their parents and doctoral studies as excuses to avoid discussions about marriage. Only one participant reported having frequent arguments with her parents over the pressure back when she was in her late 20's, a few years ago. As her parents aged, she now navigates the issue more gently and with greater care. The lack of conflict among my participants, coupled with some of their feelings of guilt and desire to care for their aging parents, even when they are uncertain of their parents' attitudes towards their sexual minority status, underscores the continued impact of filial piety on Chinese family dynamics. One bisexual male participant shared that he was unsure if he would disclose his sexual orientation to his parents if he ever entered a serious relationship with another man. However, he acknowledged that a romantic relationship with a woman would be more acceptable to his parents. Regardless of his future relationships, he expressed a deep commitment to providing for his parents' physical and financial well-being in their old age. Similarly, a gay male participant described his intention to come out to his parents gradually, prioritizing their emotional well-being during the whole process. This participant also expressed feelings of guilt over his inability to fulfill traditional filial piety obligations, such as providing grandchildren to his parents. These experiences reveal that, for some Chinese sexual minorities, the inability to meet all filial piety expectations leads to some levels of internal conflict.

My Presentation Outline

In my presentation, I will begin by outlining the main purposes and significance of my research. I will then discuss the theoretical frameworks and relevant literature on "leftover women" stigmas and sexual minority stress in Mainland China. I will spend the majority of my presentation focusing on the strategies my participants use to manage familial relationship pressures, incorporating direct anonymous quotations from a few interviews. I will conclude by discussing the broader social-cultural implications of my participants' avoidance of conflict with culturally conservative parents and the psychological defense mechanisms they use to conform to filial piety.

Comparative Study of Multilingual Education Developments and Their Effects on Southeast Asian Education Systems: Case Studies in Indonesia and Vietnam

PHAM Khanh Nhi

Multilingual education (MLE) has emerged as a central concern in Southeast Asia, where nations must balance cultural diversity, national unity, and global competitiveness. Indonesia and Vietnam—two linguistically rich yet politically distinct countries—offer valuable comparative insights. This study investigates how colonial legacies, nation-building processes, and globalization have shaped their language-in-education policies, with a particular focus on how governance structures affect policy implementation and educational equity. The research is guided by Policy History Theory, Sociolinguistic Theory, Assemblage Theory, Comparative Education Theory, and the UNESCO Multilingual Education Framework. It addresses three core questions: (1) How has multilingual education evolved in Indonesia and Vietnam? (2) How do governance models shape implementation outcomes? (3) What lessons can inform inclusive education across Southeast Asia?

Adopting a qualitative, literature-based comparative case study, this study analyzes policy documents, historical accounts, and prior empirical research to trace how colonial regulations, national ideologies, global discourses, and local actors interact to form complex "assemblages" of multilingual education. Findings show that both nations institutionalized national languages—Bahasa Indonesia and Vietnamese—as instruments of unity, often at the expense of indigenous languages. Indonesia's post-1998 decentralization through Kurikulum Merdeka has enabled schools to design local curricula integrating regional languages and cultural heritage—such as incorporating Balinese or Sundanese storytelling in primary classrooms. However, uneven teacher training, limited funding, and varying local commitment produce disparities across regions. In contrast, Vietnam's centralized governance model guarantees uniform policy direction but restricts local adaptation. Teachers implementing bilingual programs for ethnic minorities frequently encounter top-down directives, inadequate learning materials, and limited pedagogical autonomy. Colonial legacies, referring to the historical privileging of colonial or national languages under Dutch and French rule, continue to structure language hierarchies—systems where certain languages hold higher cultural and economic capital. Assemblage Theory clarifies how these legacies interact with global English-dominant ideologies and national modernization goals, resulting in uneven implementation and persistent inequality.

The study concludes that achieving linguistic equity requires both policy recognition and practical transformation. Beyond legislation, investment is needed in teacher professional development, context-specific curricula, and inclusive educational technologies, such as digital learning resources in minority languages and remote learning platforms for underserved communities. These tools, while promising, must be adapted to local contexts to avoid reproducing inequity. Ultimately, viewing multilingualism as both a right and a resource is crucial for building inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable education systems that align with global human rights and development goals across Southeast Asia.

An Analysis of the Influence of Sociolinguistic Factors on Primary School Students' Academic Achievements in Lao PDR
YAO Jiling

Current research primarily focuses on the influence of various factors on eventual educational achievement, particularly in higher education. However, it is crucial to recognize that educational attainment is an ongoing process, where early achievements cumulatively and probabilistically influence later success. Without access to high-quality primary education, the likelihood of progressing to higher education is significantly diminished. Furthermore, from a human capital perspective, the social return ratio in primary education is the highest compared to other educational stages, especially in low- and middle-income countries. On the other hand, Philippine Daily Inquirer (2023) showcased the average scores in mathematics, reading, and writing among fifth-grade students from six Southeast Asian countries, with Laos consistently ranking last. This highlights the necessity to investigate the potential rationale.

Previous studies have reported mixed results regarding the influence of sociolinguistic factors on primary students' academic achievement. Moreover, in the context of Laos, there are very few studies that focus on the influence of parental involvement on low SES and high SES families, as well as the specific effect sizes for each. Therefore, based on the SEA-PLM 2019 data, this study employs Ordinary Least Squares and mediation analysis to evaluate the influence of sociolinguistic factors on primary students' academic performance and the mediating effect of parental involvement separately. This study highlights a significant positive correlation between high SES families and students' academic achievement. Additionally, when the household language aligns with the instructional language, there is a statistically significant positive correlation with students' academic achievement. When parental involvement is included as a mediating variable, it is found to have a positive moderating effect on students' academic performance for both high SES and low SES families. Notably, the moderating effect is more pronounced for low SES families compared to high SES families.

These findings suggest that in Laos, parental involvement fosters primary students' academic achievement. Moreover, for low SES families, parental involvement can mitigate the educational disparities caused by differences in sociolinguistic factors.

Beyond Policy-Driven ESD -Teachers' Identities and Practices supporting ESD Without "ESD" in Japan
TAKIGUCHI Ayane

This study aims to explore the educational beliefs and professional identities of Japanese high school teachers who engage in educational practices that contribute to sustainable development without explicitly using the term "Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)."ESD aims to restructure education and learning at all levels so that theyto contribute to sustainable development and to strengthen teaching and learning in all activities that promote sustainable development (UNESCO, 2021). While previous studies have criticized the insufficient implementation of ESD in Japan, various forms of teaching and learning that reflect the ESD philosophy are already being practiced in schools

without using the name "ESD" (Takiguchi, 2025). From this perspective, ESD in Japan can be interpreted as being implemented in forms sometimes different from those promoted by Japanese government policy. By focusing on such ESD without "ESD" practices, this study aims to understand the discrepancies between Japanese government policy-driven ESD and the practices implemented by teachers based on their own educational visions in schools. Using a qualitative case study approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers who intentionally avoid using the term ESD while pursuing related educational goals. To analyze the relationship between their practices and ESD, Maruyama's (2022) model of "education about, in, and for sustainable development" was applied. The findings indicate a gap between policy and practice: while educational policy promotes the implementation of ESD and encourages the incorporation of concepts such as "sustainable development" and "SDGs" into education, the teachers emphasized education that enables students to live independently and critically in the world. They believed it was not necessarily essential to adopt the terms "sustainable development" or "SDGs" to realize their educational goals and felt discomfort with introducing such politically- loaded concepts into education. Based on these differing views from of the policy, the teachers intentionally avoided using the term ESD and practiced education not as ESD promoters, but as individual teachers who sincerely wished for the growth and development of their students. At first glance, these teachers' educational visions and practices appear to conflict with policy-driven ESD. However, the content of their teaching was consistent with Maruyama's model and ultimately aligned with the philosophy of ESD. Moreover, in these practices, students engaged with structural issues underlying social problems such as wealth disparity, unequal distribution, and the limits of capitalism. Thus, this case represents a form of practice that transcends the existing criticism of ESD—that it reproduces the status quo by avoiding structural and political issues and narrowing its focus to individual values and behaviors (Huckle & Wals, 2015). In other words, by taking an independent stance toward policy-driven ESD, teachers were able to develop practices that went beyond its limitations. This study suggests that teachers' autonomous pursuit of students' own "development" can constitute an alternative form of education for sustainability, one that transcends the limitations of policy-promoted ESD.

Negotiating Teacher Professional Identity in the Context of Integrating the Chinese National Curriculum and IB Programmes: Insights from Practice
XU Yingqian

Integrating the Chinese National Curriculum (CNC) with International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes presents a complex challenge for teachers, as they navigate the intersection of two distinct educational frameworks with differing philosophies, pedagogies, and assessment approaches. The CNC emphasizes moral development, national identity, and standardized content mastery, while the IB promotes inquiry-based learning, international-mindedness, and student-centered approaches. These contrasting priorities require teachers to reconcile competing demands, adapt practices, and reflect on their professional roles. Central to this process are teacher professional identity (TPI) and teacher professional learning (TPL), both of which are dynamic and socially situated. Understanding how TPI and TPL interact is critical for supporting teachers in dual-curriculum contexts, enabling them to balance personal, institutional, and policy-driven

expectations while fostering their professional growth. The integration of CNC and IB inherently involves tensions and comparisons. Teachers encounter conflicts between global competencies and local mandates, between international pedagogical ideals and national educational goals, and between colleagues from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds.

These tensions manifest in various ways, such as challenges in designing lessons that simultaneously meet exam-oriented requirements and inquiry-based objectives, or in negotiating assessment approaches that satisfy both curricula. Teachers' responses to these challenges vary widely. Some embrace innovative practices, experimenting with IB pedagogical approaches while aligning with CNC expectations, whereas others experience stress, uncertainty, or resistance, perceiving integration as potentially compromising the integrity of either curriculum. Such variation is influenced by teachers' cultural orientations, professional experience, career stage, and prior familiarity with either curriculum. Experienced teachers may feel vulnerable when adapting to unfamiliar pedagogical strategies, while early-career teachers may be more flexible but less confident in decision-making. The diversity of teaching staff further complicates integration. Local and international teachers bring differing perspectives, assumptions, and expectations to the classroom, which can lead to misunderstandings, professional conflict, or constructive debate.

Successful integration requires collaborative mechanisms that allow teachers to share knowledge, engage in reflective discussions, and co-develop solutions. Professional learning communities, teacher research groups, and mentorship structures are particularly important in mediating conflicts, fostering reflective engagement, and promoting consistency in curriculum implementation. Supporting teachers in this process is not only a matter of providing technical knowledge, but also of attending to the social and cultural dimensions of professional identity development.
Teacher professional learning (TPL) is essential in equipping educators to navigate the complexities of dual-curriculum integration. TPL encompasses formal activities such as workshops, seminars, and mentoring, as well as informal interactions within professional learning communities, teacher research groups, and collaborative planning sessions. Effective TPL emphasizes reflection, collaboration, and context-sensitive practice, enabling teachers to acquire knowledge, experiment with pedagogical strategies, and develop adaptive expertise. However, existing professional learning frameworks often present challenges.

Local teachers may participate in policy-mandated CNC training that does not fully address the needs of integrated curricula, while international teachers attend IB-provided training that may not align with national requirements. As a result, teachers often experience extended professional learning demands and uncertainty regarding the relevance and practical applicability of training activities. Strategic, contextualized professional learning is therefore necessary to support teachers' development, enabling them to reconcile curriculum demands while negotiating and strengthening their professional identities. Teacher professional identity (TPI) is a dynamic, socially mediated process shaped by self-perception, interactions with colleagues and leaders, and broader cultural and institutional values.

Curriculum integration tests teachers' professional identities, as they must negotiate conflicting philosophies, assessment practices, and pedagogical expectations. Emotional responses, including stress, anxiety, or heightened self-awareness, are influenced by the presence of professional support, recognition, and constructive feedback from peers and leadership. Teachers with adaptive and reflective professional identities are more likely to respond positively to integration, experimenting with new practices and maintaining commitment to both curricula, while those with rigid or protective identities may experience difficulties reconciling dual demands.

Cultural orientations further shape identity negotiation: teachers with collectivist tendencies may prioritize compliance and group cohesion, while those with individualist tendencies may focus on personal achievement and pedagogical innovation. This study conceptualizes the interplay between TPL and TPI within the context of curriculum integration, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between professional learning and identity formation. Effective professional learning enables teachers to transition from "curriculum deliverers" to "curriculum makers," enhancing their reflective capacity, self-efficacy, and commitment to continuous professional growth. In turn, teachers' professional identities influence their engagement with professional learning, shaping the strategies they adopt in curriculum enactment and classroom practice. This dual perspective provides a lens through which to examine how teachers manage curricular conflicts, reconcile competing educational paradigms, and develop adaptive expertise in practice. While research on TPL and TPI exists, most studies focus on pre-service or early-career teachers, leaving a gap in understanding how experienced teachers navigate evolving professional identities amid curriculum integration.

This study addresses this gap by exploring two central research questions: How do teachers' responses and adaptations to curriculum integration influence their professional identity? How does professional learning facilitate or hinder this process? Through these questions, the study investigates how teachers negotiate identity, manage conflict, and reconcile the demands of dual curricula in real-world educational contexts. A qualitative case study approach is adopted to explore these dynamics. The selected case is a private bilingual IB school in Shanghai, which exemplifies real-world challenges and innovative practices in dual-curriculum integration. Data collection includes semi-structured interviews with teachers and school leadership, document analysis of curriculum guides, policies, lesson and unit plans, and professional development records, as well as researcher journals and reflexive memos capturing contextual observations, implicit cultural factors, and power dynamics.

Approximately 30 participants, representing diverse roles, experience levels, and cultural backgrounds, are recruited through purposive sampling to ensure breadth of perspectives. Data analysis employs thematic coding guided by both a Curriculum Integration Framework and a Teacher Identity Framework, enabling exploration of how institutional structures and individual experiences intersect in shaping professional learning and identity. Triangulation of multiple data sources and researcher reflexivity enhances credibility, ensuring a robust and context-sensitive interpretation of findings. The anticipated outcomes of this study include a deeper understanding of how professional learning supports teacher identity negotiation, how teachers manage

conflicts arising from dual-curriculum demands, and how curriculum integration is enacted as a negotiated and contextually situated process. Findings will inform school leaders in designing school-based professional learning programs, developing strategies to foster collaborative engagement, and supporting teachers in adapting to complex policy and pedagogical environments.

By illuminating the interplay between professional identity, learning, and curriculum integration, this study contributes to theory and practice in international and Chinese educational contexts, offering insights relevant for policy-makers, teacher educators, and school leaders aiming to foster adaptive, reflective, and culturally responsive educators.

Navigating Inclusive Religious Education Approach to Sexuality for Select GenZ

Richard NECESITO

As young Filipinos heighten their engagement with digital platforms for knowledge and social relations, a "Caring Environment" emerges as a significant sphere in addressing sexual issues, concerns, or questions. There is a need to provide a space where compassion, inclusivity, and a supportive environment can promote constructive dialogue and learning experiences. Within this framework, addressing sexual education becomes an educational endeavor and a moral or ethical responsibility. It calls for integrating religious teachings with contemporary perspectives on sexuality, fostering holistic and inclusive approaches that respect diverse beliefs and identities. In Filipino youth's exploration of sexuality and its cohorts, the digital realm serves as an extensive space and a multifaceted landscape to navigate. As digital connectivity becomes increasingly ubiquitous, exchanges about sexuality transcend customary spaces. Designing a framework of inclusive religious education within the campus becomes imperative in this context. Serious consideration of the intersectionality of religious beliefs and sexual perspectives among Filipino youth is at the heart of this study. This paper focuses on developing an inclusive religious education approach to prevailing sexuality for select Generation Z students of St. Dominic college of Asia. It assumes that providing an Inclusive Religious Education approach to sexuality will engender a more holistic and healthy understanding of sexual ethics on prevailing sexual behavior. It maps out the inclusive factors that influence the perceptions of Gen Z in connection to sexual perspectives. Simultaneously, the vocabulary of social sciences, religion, and ethics acknowledges the diversity and richness of sexuality due to varied contexts and cultures. With the call to evangelize the youth using their context and current experiences, educating them toward critical, life-oriented, healthy sexual ethics remains challenging for religious educators (Directory for Catechesis, art. 255-256). By listening to the youth's voices through this study's select respondents, an initial appreciation of their issues, concerns, and questions on pertinent topics on sexuality becomes possible. Identifying the prevalent sexual behavior on sexuality, as expressed by the respondents, will provide impetus for the development of a more inclusive approach to sexual ethics. Clarification on the stance of the present youth concerning prevalent sexual behavior or among them engenders a dialogical pedagogy in addressing a "taboo" topic (i.e., sexuality) in the present cultural context of the majority of Filipinos. Hence Religious Education's dynamics on inclusivity conform to Margaret Farley's "Just Love: A Framework for

Christian Sexual Ethics" (2006, pp.1-322). Hence, this paper attempts to offer an inclusive and distinct approach to sexual ethics rooted in justice.

The Production of Cosmopolitan Strategies Amongst the New Globally-Oriented Elite: Two Contrasting Cases of Legitimacy

Jen KIRKWOOD

Introduction

If we consider the existence of elites, privilege and power, as objective phenomenon, that is, to consider them as an enduring fixture with possession and monopolisation of resources (Weber 1921, Parkin 1979 and Tilly 1998) then what might we miss? Such a view would avoid consideration of new class practices and use of emergent forms of schooling; the ways in which privilege and power are made and enacted in contemporary globalising conditions. In contrast to perceptions of global, international or cosmopolitan schooling creating an "ever-more-singularly educated" elite (Cousin & Chauvin, 2021) this research draws upon a Bourdeusian framework to consider the multiple formulations of globally-oriented measures of legitimacy for these new elites.

Methodology

This research draws on contrasting ethnographic data from two globally-oriented "world schools"; one in Beijing and the other in New York City. Ethnographic data was generated during the early and formative years of these newly created "world schools." This presentation will draw on semi-structured interviews conducted with students (age 5-18), parents, teachers and administrators in both locations.

Findings

Using ethnographic data, this research draws attention to the contextualised strategizing and situated "work" of class-making for the newly-moneyed and globally oriented elite in contrasting global cities. Findings show a shared trajectory to the US Ivy-league, a tangible goal across both locations. Yet, I re-orient the often taken-for granted significance of this institutional goal and overlap. I highlight instead the meaning and motivations for such a choice in ways that significantly alter the nature of elite legitimacy in each context. As such, this paper considers the production of cosmopolitan strategies as a facet of elite (re)production and as a key outcome of a globally-minded "world school" education. Through consideration of the nature of cosmopolitanism as it was produced in and through these schools, I give close attention to the multiple influences and layers involved in creating the attitudes, practices and forms of elite class-making in Beijing and New York. In so doing, I provide insight to the motivations and characteristics of what they are producing in the name of cosmopolitanism; the measures of becoming a worthy and legitimate globally oriented elite. This paper focuses on the production of two cosmopolitan strategies. Each providing insight to the relational partnership between families and school that capture the in-the-making processes of these new elites as they construct legitimacy for their children. On the surface, the shared interest in educational institutions amongst these new elite families mistakenly suggests a comparable conception of what is valuable and valued. My research shows that the cosmopolitan strategies of these families are produced in ways that speak to a context-specific and grounded formulation of what makes a legitimate and worthy global elite.

In relation to the conference theme:
In my presentation I will speak to the merits and implications of a comparative approach from the perspective of my research. Simply put, I value comparative education as a methodological foundation from which to deepen and enhance understanding of educational and social phenomenon. The methodological "contrast" between my field sites in Beijing and New York was used to enhance the analysis and understanding of motives and aspirations underpinning educational practices and elite social (re)production. I wanted to know what they were doing, but more importantly, why and how.

Crucially, in considering the phenomenon of World Schools, my two field sites were considered broadly comparable in educational terms. Yet, I did not seek to compare them and nor did I pre-assume their compatibility or congruity. Rather, I sought to contrast them. I asked, "What can we learn by using these sites to shed light, each on the other?" In this way, I created a figurative "discussion" between my two field sites. I call this approach a contrast-global-ethnography, a comparative approach that considers each site in light of the other and in so doing, requires dialogue as a core analytical method.

It is my hope this contribution would be meaningful to the CESHK community and I look forward to the opportunity to explore it further.