

Nordic–East Asia Higher Education Research Symposium 2026

Turbulent Times in Higher Education and Society

Friday, 14 August 2026 | Tampere University, City Centre Campus, Pinni B building | Hybrid

Outline of the Day

Time	Programme item	Location
08:00–09:00	Registration	B1097
09:00–09:15	Opening remarks by Prof. Jussi Kivistö	B1097
09:15–10:15	Keynote address by Prof. Joshua Mok	B1097
10:15–10:30	Coffee break	B1123
10:30–12:00	Parallel sessions	Track 1: B1097 / Track 2: B3112 / Track 3: B1083
12:00–13:00	Lunch break	Minerva University Restaurant (2nd floor, Pinni B) / self-arranged
13:00–14:30	Parallel sessions	Track 1: B1097 / Track 2: B3112 / Track 3: B1083
14:30–14:45	Coffee break	B1123
14:45–16:15	Parallel sessions	Track 1: B1097 / Track 2: B3112 / Track 3: B1083
16:15–16:30	Short break	B1123
16:30–18:00	Parallel sessions	Track 1: B1097 / Track 2: B3112 / Track 3: B1083
18:00–18:30	Break / move to reception	B1123
18:30 onwards	Conference cocktail reception	B1123

Parallel session overview

- **10:30–12:00:** Track 1: Governance, Policy, Internationalisation, and Institutional Resilience — B1097
- **10:30–12:00:** Track 2: Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Digital Transformation — B3112
- **10:30–12:00:** Track 3: Equity, Wellbeing, Academic Work, and Graduate Futures — B1083
- **13:00–14:30:** Track 1: Governance, Policy, Internationalisation, and Institutional Resilience — B1097
- **13:00–14:30:** Track 2: Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Digital Transformation — B3112
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- **14:45–16:15:** Track 1: Governance, Policy, Internationalisation, and Institutional Resilience — B1097
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- **16:30–18:00:** Track 3: Equity, Wellbeing, Academic Work, and Graduate Futures — B1083

More information on the event website:

<https://events.tuni.fi/neahers2026/>



Location

Pinni B building, Tampere University City Centre Campus, Kalevantie 4, 33100 Tampere



CITY CENTRE CAMPUS



B1083
Track 3

B3112 (3rd floor)
Track 2

B1097
Registration &
Track 1

B1123
Coffee breaks &
reception

Detailed Programme

08:00–09:00 — Registration and morning coffee | B1097

09:00–09:15 — Opening remarks | B1097 | Prof. Jussi Kivistö (Tampere University)

09:15–10:15 — Keynote address | B1097 | Prof. Joshua Mok (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology): The Quest for International Higher Education in Hong Kong: Comparative Perspectives and Public Policy Issues

Abstract: Positioning as an international city in Asia, the HKSAR Government launches strategic measures to make the city a leading international higher education hub. This keynote speech discusses the public policy and strategy adapted by the HKSAR Government to attract and retain global talents to study and work in Hong Kong. The talk also draws comparative insights from other education hubs like the ones in the United Kingdom, Singapore and Malaysia when assessing hub experiences. This talk also discusses public policy and management issues when the hub project is implemented against an increasingly competitive environment.

10:15–10:30 — Coffee break | B1123

10:30–12:00 — Parallel sessions

Track 1: Governance, Policy, Internationalization, and Institutional Resilience | B1097

- 10:30 (On-site) — **Ani Hovhannisyan; Gayane Harutyunyan** (National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility): **Beyond Procedure: Qualification Recognition in Armenia's Multi-Crisis Context**

Description: Qualification recognition is increasingly challenged by crisis, displacement, and complex mobility patterns. Armenia represents a unique case of “recognition under continuous disruption,” shaped by overlapping displacement flows from Ukraine, Russia, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and the large-scale displacement of ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023. The experience of ARMENIC explores how recognition systems designed for stability operate under sustained pressure. While Armenia is strongly aligned with international recognition standards and has adopted innovative approaches for applicants with incomplete documentation, important gaps remain between policy and practice. Thus, recognition is not merely a technical procedure but a strategic tool for education, employment, and socio-economic integration, emphasizing the need for more adaptive, flexible, and crisis-responsive systems capable of functioning effectively amid continuous disruption.

- 11:00 (On-site) — **Uswa Zainab** (Tampere University): **Navigating the Tensions of Internationalisation and Nationalism in Nordic Higher Education**

Description: This PhD research investigates the evolving tension between internationalisation and nationalism within Nordic higher education policy since 2015. Focusing on Finland and Denmark as comparative case studies, the study moves beyond a simplistic binary opposition. It examines how national interests are discursively constructed and negotiated in policy, leading to phenomena such as “nationalist reordering”. Through a critical discourse analysis of policy documents, institutional strategies, and public discourse, the research explores the implications of these dynamics for governance, language policy, institutional autonomy, and national identity. This presentation will outline the theoretical framework, methodological approach, and preliminary findings from the comparative analysis of Finland's shift towards selective internationalisation and Denmark's dynamic policy trajectory concerning international student intake and English-taught programs.

- 11:30 (On-site) — **Dian Liu** (University of Stavanger), **Yingxin Liu** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen), Vegard Sjurseike Wiborg (NIFU Nordic Institute for Studies of innovation, research and education): **International students' experience in Norway: academic and social interactions, satisfaction and intention to stay**

Description: Norwegian government sees higher education internationalization as vital to tertiary quality, echoing global recognition of international students' contributions beyond finance. Policy links mobility to standards, institutional prestige, skilled migration, and competence development; inflows have surged since 2000. They are key to "Internationalisation at Home," aimed at engaged, appealing and accountable global citizens. Using recurring cross-sectional surveys by the Norwegian Directorate for Internationalization and Quality Development in Higher Education, this article examines international students' experiences in Norway over time: how local–international interaction affects satisfaction, psychological wellbeing and stay likelihood. Findings show positive effects on general satisfaction, study-abroad wellbeing, and intentions to stay for work or further study. We urge embracing these perspectives in Norwegian HE amid tuition-fee debates criticized as impeding internationalization.

Track 2: Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Digital Transformation | B3112

- 10:30 (Online) — **Andrew Hin Nam Fong** (City University of Hong Kong): **The Human-AI Collaborative Cycle: Practical Strategies for Scaling Feedback and Ensuring Grading Equity in Large Media Studies Cohorts**

Description: In Higher Education, large class sizes often compromise the delivery of qualitative, personalized feedback, leading to "marking fatigue" and assessment bias. This proposal introduces the "Human-AI Collaborative Cycle," a technology-enhanced assessment framework implemented in postgraduate Media Studies cohorts. By integrating Generative AI (LLMs like ChatGPT and Gemini) as a procedural partner rather than an autonomous grader, this method integrates human qualitative insights with computational validation. The three-stage process ensures statistical consistency, aligns with institutional grading benchmarks, and mitigates subconscious bias. Ultimately, this evidence-informed practice demonstrates how AI can scale evaluative dialogue, upholding academic rigor and equitable student support.

- 11:00 (Online) — **Rongrong Zheng** (The Education University of Hong Kong): **Empowering AI Technology and Revitalizing Classics: Exploring Interdisciplinary Paradigms in Dubbing Art Courses**

Description: The rapid development of AI technology is driving a profound transformation in the paradigm of art education. Based on the teaching practice of the course "Fundamentals of Dubbing", a new paradigm of dubbing teaching is proposed and verified, which includes "AI technology empowerment classical text activation cultural innovation expression". Using "Journey to the West" as a cultural carrier, through project driven group workshops, we delve into the cultural interpretation of classic literature, analyse character psychology in depth, and use AI tools such as timbre cloning and emotion analysis for audio synthesis, achieving effective reconstruction of sound narrative. This paradigm effectively cultivates students' interdisciplinary integration ability and cultural literacy, providing a replicable practical path for art education in the AI era.

- 11:30 (Online) — **Stefanie Habermann** (IU International University of Applied Sciences), et al.: **Transition into Higher Education as a Turbulent Time: Developing and validating STRiD(-E), a Questionnaire on Study Demands in the Transition into Distance Education**

Description: The transition into higher education is often demanding, and these challenges can be especially pronounced in distance education, where students must navigate academic requirements, digital systems, and social integration without campus-based support. This presentation introduces STRiD-E, a newly developed questionnaire designed to assess how easy or difficult beginning distance learners find it to cope with key study demands during their

first semesters. Based on prior review and focus-group findings, the instrument covers academic self-management, orientation in institutional and digital learning environments, and belonging. Using survey data from first- and second semester Bachelor's students, the study examines the questionnaire's factor structure, item quality, and reliability. STRiD-E aims to support research and help institutions identify critical transition demands early, enabling targeted onboarding and support to reduce disengagement and dropout.

Track 3: Equity, Wellbeing, Academic Work, and Graduate Futures | B1083

- 10:30 (Online) — **Augustine Chibueze Ohuawunwa** (Paragon Scholars Academy): **The Paradox of Education: Exploring the Disconnect Between Higher Education and Moral Degeneration in the contemporary Society**

Description: The idea that education can fix all societal problems is now questioned due to rising unethical behaviour and moral decay today. Even with more universities and colleges, corruption, inequality, and violence still plague communities globally. This contradiction raises questions about the link between schooling and moral growth. This essay examines the gap between academic progress and ethical decline, arguing that focus on intellect, research, language, and technology has pushed moral values aside. Based on studies and observations, it suggests that education's narrow emphasis on cognitive skills instead of full character building explains this paradox. The paper concludes that education must shift toward emotional intelligence, social responsibility, and empathy to tackle current moral decline.

- 11:00 (Online) — **Nina Chala** (National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy), **Oksana Poplavska** (Kyiv National Economic University named after Vadym Hetman): **Higher education in emergencies: the thin line between talent loss (brain drain) and knowledge circulation**

Description: The case of Ukraine is relevant in the context of war-driven displacement, as many young people seek education opportunities and safety abroad. HEIs have experienced significant student losses, raising concerns about their sustainability. This study reconsiders migration not as physical movement, but as a process of knowledge circulation. The preservation of human capital is closely linked to HEIs' resilience. Institutional resilience refers to the capacity of HEIs to adapt rapidly, maintain governance, academic standards, and international partnerships despite disruption and displacement. Evidence from Ukrainian HEIs shows that mobility does not automatically result in brain drain. Through international cooperation, digitalisation, networks, and innovation, mobility can evolve into brain circulation that supports institutional continuity. Mobility is inevitable; whether it leads to talent loss or knowledge circulation depends largely on institutional strategies and policies.

- 11:30 (Online) — **Lesya Lymar** (Bogomolets National Medical University): **Fostering Ukrainian Medical Students' Resilience under the War: Teachers' Impact**

Description: The full-scale war in Ukraine has transformed higher medical education: students study under air-raid alarms, shelling, displacement, blackouts and unstable internet. These conditions affect wellbeing, motivation and identity, making resilience a key educational outcome. The study analyses how teachers support Ukrainian medical students through pedagogical, communicative and organizational mechanisms. Teachers foster resilience by creating safe and predictable learning environments, using adaptive formats, clear instructions and reasonable deadlines. They model ethical responsibility, emotional discipline and professional resilience. By linking learning with patient care and the social mission of medicine, teachers help students preserve meaning. Reflection and peer interaction reduce isolation and support empathy. Teachers cannot replace psychologists or social workers; institutional support is essential. Trauma-sensitive teaching should be a priority of Ukrainian medical education.

12:00–13:00 — Lunch break

13:00–14:30 — Parallel sessions

Track 1: Governance, Policy, Internationalisation, and Institutional Resilience | B1097

- 13:00 (Online) — **Stefan Reindl** (Academy of Future Education, Xi'an Jiaotong - Liverpool University), **Stephanie Hollings** (Arizona State University): **Is China a future graduate study destination globally: The untold stories of international PhD students and their choice to study in China**

Description: This study looks at China's emergence as a doctoral destination for Global South students through autoethnographic narratives from international PhD candidates. Their decisions are shaped by home-country constraints, progressive exposure to Chinese academic environments, perceived institutional quality, scholarship support, bilateral diplomatic relations, and career objectives. Students experience China as a pragmatic alternative to Western universities. China's scholarship-driven model reduces financial and administrative barriers and creates access for students otherwise excluded from global academic mobility. Some students occupy dual roles as beneficiaries and contributors. While China's semi-peripheral positioning offers distinct opportunities shaped by different logics than Western models, questions remain regarding supervision quality, completion rates, and outcomes. Expanded access constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for equity.

- 13:30 (Online) — **Julieta Kapanadze** (San Diego State University - Georgia): **Beyond Academic Integrity: Institutionalizing Integrity through University Governance and Organisational Culture**

Description: Academic integrity is commonly viewed through the lens of student misconduct. This presentation shifts the focus to institutions, examining how governance structures, leadership practices, and organisational culture shape integrity in universities. Drawing on literature from higher education, public governance, and organisational theory, it explores how integrity becomes embedded in institutional systems and everyday practices. The presentation argues that integrity is not only an ethical aspiration but also a foundation for institutional resilience, legitimacy, and trust in times of uncertainty and change.

- 14:00 (On-site) — **Simone Campanella** (University of Macerata): **The crisis of Higher Education**

Description: The abstract offers a critical interpretation of Quality in higher education as a concept historically characterized by a tension between evolution and crisis. On the one hand, Quality is associated with the improvement of educational paradigms, teaching practices, and assessment processes; on the other, it is affected by phenomena such as massification, commodification, and the neoliberal transformation of universities into private investments in human capital. The text also highlights the impact of contemporary geopolitical dynamics in redefining the social responsibility dimension of Quality and argues for its understanding as a mechanism of educational governance. Within this perspective, the integration of New Public Governance and Non-Affirmative Education Theory provides a framework for promoting participatory and reflective evaluation models that are both institutionally legitimate and respectful of the educational autonomy of the actors involved.

Track 2: Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Digital Transformation | B3112

- 13:00 (On-site) — **Blessing Maregere** (Leeds Trinity University): **Dialogic Assessment in the AI Era: Professional Discussions as a Human-Centred Response to Assessment Turbulence in Higher Education**

Description: How can assessment remain trustworthy when polished written work is no longer enough to evidence learning? This presentation explores dialogic and oral assessment as a human-centred response to the challenges GenAI creates for authorship, authenticity, feedback and academic judgement. Drawing on qualitative research in UK degree apprenticeships, it examines professional discussions as structured spaces where learners explain decisions,

connect theory to practice, respond to questioning and demonstrate professional reasoning. The session shares key findings, implementation challenges and a conceptual model for designing professional discussions around learning foundations, reflective growth and assessment for development. It will interest anyone rethinking assessment, employability, inclusion and the future of human-centred higher education.

- 13:30 (On-site) — **Hiroshi Ito** (Nagoya University of Commerce and Business): **Revisiting the Case Method in the Age of Generative Artificial Intelligence**

Description: This study explores how generative artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming management education, focusing on challenges to the case method. Whereas the case method fosters critical thinking through preparation, discussion, and judgment under uncertainty, AI introduces tension between algorithmic efficiency and the cognitive effort required for meaningful learning. Drawing on interviews with faculty at a Japanese business school known for its intensive use of the case method, we analyse responses through three competing institutional logics: protecting competitiveness, the learning process, and independent thinking. We employ a phase-based framework that maps AI's impact across the three phases of case-based learning: preparation, discussion, and judgment. As AI erodes epistemic scarcity, management education must shift toward cultivating responsible human judgment—a shift requiring institutional redesign.

- 14:00 (Online) — **Beloufa Chahra** (Private College of Nursing): **A Philosophical-Psychological Approach to AI in Higher Education Amid War**

Description: The wars unfolding across the World recently may lead to global instability creating profound uncertainty for higher education institutions, their students, and their staff. In such contexts, there is a powerful temptation to turn to artificial intelligence as a tool for prediction, control, and closure to treat AI as a technological solution to volatility. This paper argues for a different approach. Drawing on existential philosophy (Heidegger, Sartre), trauma-informed psychology (Herman, van der Kolk), and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner), it asks: How can universities use AI to help individuals and communities inhabit uncertainty to prepare, to care, and to sustain meaning without pretending to resolve what cannot be resolved? Existential philosophy offers a foundational lens.

Track 3: Equity, Wellbeing, Academic Work, and Graduate Futures | B1083

- 13:00 (On-site) — **Oleksandra Nych** (Tampere University): **Institutionalising Trauma-informed Pedagogy: Professional Development for Teaching Students with a Forced Migration Background**

Description: As student populations are increasingly shaped by global displacement, higher education institutions face growing demands to support learners with forced migration backgrounds. Drawing on qualitative interviews with teacher educators, teaching and learning centre staff, and professional development leaders across Europe, this presentation explores how trauma-informed pedagogy is understood and supported in practice. The findings reveal significant gaps in professional development and institutional readiness, alongside a small number of promising practices. The presentation discusses what is needed to create more inclusive and trauma-responsive higher education environments.

- 13:30 (On-site) — **Josephine Lau**, Terhi Nokkala (University of Jyväskylä): **Developing Transversal Skills and Professional Qualities for Doctoral and Early Career Researchers – The Case of METEOR Project**

Description: The EU-Horizon METEOR project addresses precarious career prospects and skills mismatches faced by PhDs and early-career researchers (ECRs). It utilizes Peer Mentoring Groups (PMGs) of 4–6 members from diverse disciplines to collaborate on research innovation proposals focused on sustainability. Based on the theory of

Communities of Practice, the PMGs offer a "flat hierarchy" and safe space for learning-by-doing and exchanging tacit knowledge for academic and professional survival. Using thematic analysis, this study evaluates data from focus groups, surveys, and observation notes from METEOR Academies. It examines how PMGs facilitate transversal skills for careers within and beyond academia. METEOR enhances employability by teaching project management and leadership. It offers a scalable doctoral training model that combats isolation and provides unique insights into how group dynamics shape professional identity.

- 14:00 (Online) — **Bhavani Ramamoorthi** (University of Jyväskylä): **Beyond survival mode -Nurturing Community Resilience among Doctoral Researchers in Finland in Uncertain Times**

Description: Doctoral researchers globally face varied challenges, yet academic resilience remains largely framed as an individual capacity, placing the burden of systemic challenges on single researchers. Collective and relational dimensions of resilience remain under explored. Beyond Survival Mode: Cultivating Community-Based Resilience Among Doctoral Students in Finland, funded by the Finnish Work Environment Fund, challenges this narrative. By creating dialogical spaces, the project investigates resilience as a collective capacity where doctoral researchers learn from one another and co-create knowledge for navigating complex environments. Integrating Appreciative Inquiry and photo-voice within a social constructivist framework, the study uses strength-based dialogue and visual storytelling to explore how resilience emerges collectively. The project develops community-oriented models for doctoral wellbeing that equip researchers with collective capacities needed to navigate complexity together.

14:30–14:45 — Coffee break | B1123

14:45–16:15 — Parallel sessions

Track 1: Governance, Policy, Internationalisation, and Institutional Resilience | B1097

- 14:45 (On-site) — **Jarkko Pirkkalainen** (University of Bordeaux): **Institutional Sustainability in European Universities: Strategic Decision-Making of University Executives in Complex HEI Environments**

Description: European HE reforms have increased universities institutional autonomy, while raising expectations for strategic adaptability. This study examines how university presidents construct strategic decisions in complex environments and how organizational dynamics and external pressures shape institutional development. Drawing on a qualitative multi-case study of universities in France, Norway, and Finland, applying Gioia methodology, the study is empirically grounded on semi-structured interviews with university executives. The findings indicate that strategic planning processes support decision-making. However, transformative strategic decisions emerge from reflective sense-making and informal interactions within executive peer networks. The study concludes that institutional autonomy alone does not strengthen universities' long-term sustainability. Rather, strategic adaptability depends on executives' ability to legitimize and implement change within complex organizational contexts.

- 15:15 (On-site) — **Jiawen Wu** (Jyväskylä University): **Unravelling the dynamics of multiple logics: The role of field-level ideologies in higher education from institutional logics perspectives**

Description: This presentation will present a conceptual paper that explores how field-level ideologies in higher education influence the dynamics of multiple logics from institutional logics perspectives. In recent literature, ideologies have been discussed to understand higher education phenomena, such as university competition and logic mediation in higher education. This paper focuses on distinguishing the difference between logics as means and ideologies as ends. The situated practices with actors' choices enable the dynamics of multiple logics within which means-ends relations unfold. It can raise mismatches between means and ends with the role of ideologies. This paper conceptualizes the dynamics of logics with three processes: logic synergizing, logic leveraging and logic blurring. It

includes an illustrative example of the China-Finnish UAS network. The paper implies how higher education practitioners navigate different logics and ideologies in institutional complexity.

- 15:45 (On-site) — **Roksana Ulatowska** (Jagiellonian University): **Governing the Ungoverned Nationally-Developed Language Models as Strategic Assets in Higher Education**

Description: Artificial intelligence is reshaping higher education, yet universities' role in developing National Language Models (NLMs) remains underexplored. Unlike commercial large language models, NLMs are shaped by national linguistic, cultural, and epistemic priorities, raising important questions about ownership, governance, and academic agency. This presentation examines how universities engage with the development and implementation of NLMs and how this involvement is influencing institutional digital strategies, governance, and academic practice. Drawing on a multi-case study of six universities in Poland, the Czech Republic, Finland, and Taiwan, it shows that participation is driven not only by innovation, but also by concerns about digital sovereignty, linguistic diversity, and dependence on commercial providers. The presentation also highlights an emerging gap in epistemic governance.

Track 2: Teaching, Learning, Curriculum, and Digital Transformation | B3112

- 14:45 (Online) — **Eray Kara** (Giresun University), **Gökçe Güvercin Seçkin** (İstanbul Medipol University): **Institutional Silence, Ethics, and Inequality in Higher Education in the Age of Generative AI (GenAI)**

Description: GenAI is increasingly promoted in higher education, yet its adoption remains uneven, particularly in the Global South. While discussions focus on access to technology, less attention has been given to the institutional conditions that shape how GenAI is governed and used. In many universities, the absence of clear policies and ethical guidelines leaves academics to make decisions about GenAI independently, creating uncertainty and potentially reinforcing existing inequalities. This study explores institutional barriers to equitable GenAI adoption through a qualitative comparative case study of one foundation university and one state university in Türkiye. Using document analysis and a faculty focus group, it examines how organizational culture, leadership priorities, and policy gaps influence academics' engagement with GenAI. The findings contribute to discussions on inclusive and ethical GenAI governance in higher education, particularly in underrepresented Global South contexts.

- 15:15 (On-site) — **Ka Wai Leung, Tsz Wun Choy** (The Education University of Hong Kong): **Creating a Resourceful and Immersive Learning Hub to Enhance University Students' Understanding of National Security Education through the Metaverse**

Description: Considering the limited use of metaverse in tertiary educational settings, this project explores the development and evaluation of a metaverse classroom for a general education course on national security education at the Education University of Hong Kong using a mixed-method research design. Four undergraduate classes joined guided sessions to explore learning in the metaverse classroom. 85 students completed post-session surveys, collecting quantitative and qualitative data. Results show that the interactivity and enjoyment, along with the increased autonomy and collaboration in their learning in the metaverse were valued with the contextualization of national security concepts. While learners can adapt learning in technologically enhanced settings, limitations including connection instability and platform constraint were found. Future research should examine long-term learning retention, critical thinking development and the integration of additional technologies.

- 15:45 (Online) — **Teona Zhuzhunadze** (Iv. Javakishvili Tbilisi State University): **Speculative Thinking in Postdigital Education: Preparing Students for Uncertain Technological Futures**

Description: Contemporary societies are increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, algorithmic systems, and data-driven infrastructures, creating new forms of uncertainty for education. This paper explores how education can respond to rapidly evolving technological futures through the lens of postdigital education. It argues that the future should not be approached as something to be predicted or controlled but as a space for critical engagement, imagination, and ethical reflection. The paper introduces speculative methods as a pedagogical and methodological approach for exploring possible, probable, and preferable futures. Particular attention is given to the distributed classroom as a networked learning environment where learning is distributed across technologies, spaces, and participants. The paper discusses how speculative approaches can foster critical thinking, future thinking, and active participation in shaping technological futures within postdigital educational contexts.

Track 3: Equity, Wellbeing, Academic Work, and Graduate Futures | B1083

- 14:45 (Online) — **Svetlana Shenderova** (University of Helsinki, Aleksanteri Institute), **Jeremy Morris** (Aarhus University): **How privileged internationalisation drives inequalities in higher education**

Description: The presented paper develops the concept of privileged internationalisation to analyse how inequalities and neo-coloniality appear at the regional, sectoral and the university level. The authors conclude that implementation of internationalisation policy grounded on neoliberal criteria is compatible with monopolisation of privileges in authoritarian higher education systems, traditional rigidity of university governance, and indifference of international stakeholders. This undermines quality and cohesion of semi-peripheral higher education systems, and, more broadly, constrains the sustainable development of global higher education.

- 15:15 (Online) — **Mary Ann Bodine Al-Sharif** (University of Alabama at Birmingham), **MD Bayezid Islam** (BRAC University): **Navigating Cross-Border Collaboration Amid Geopolitical Tension**

Description: International research partnerships are shaped by asymmetrical distributions of resources, authority, and epistemic legitimacy. This is complicated by contemporary geopolitical shifts, including funding constraints and changing global research priorities. Situated within the broader transformations of higher education, our duoethnographic study explores the lived realities of a Global North and Global South research collaboration. The study is grounded in critical geography, conceptualizing space, borders, and institutional structures as socially constructed and intertwined with power relations. Our findings show cross-border collaboration increasingly works as a form of knowledge diplomacy, where researchers' relationships are shaped by national priorities, institutional constraints, and unequal access to resources. Collaborations are embedded within broader geopolitical dynamics that influence who can participate, whose knowledge is valued, and how research agendas are defined.

- 15:45 (Online) — **Jun Wu** (Åbo Akademi University): **From Policy to Practice: Finland's Post-2017 Integration Policy and the Talent Boost Programme for International Students' Employability**

Description: The article analyses Finland's post-2017 integration policy for international students, taking the Talent Boost programme as an embedded case to explore initiatives supporting the international students' transition into the Finnish labour market. Drawing on the Policy Cycle Framework, the study examines the design, implementation, and evaluation through a thematic analysis of policy documents. The findings show improved cross-ministerial coordination, clearer residence-permit pathways, and strengthened links between higher education and employment. However, enduring obstacles, such as rising financial demands, language barriers, and insufficient employer preparedness, persistently limit international students' labour-market integration. The study indicates that Finland has made significant progress towards a talent-focused integration system, yet gaps remain between policy ambitions and practice outcomes. It contributes to broader discussions of policies evolution for talent retention.

16:15–16:30 — Short break | B1123

16:30–18:00 — Parallel sessions

Track 1: Governance, Policy, Internationalisation, and Institutional Resilience | B1097

- 16:30 (Online) — **Xiujuan Xie** (The University of Hong Kong): **Internationalization of Doctoral Education in China's Greater Bay Area: A Qualitative Case Study of Cross-Institutional Collaborative Programs**

Description: This study examined the contextual factors, practices, advantages and challenges of collaborative doctoral programmes in China's Greater Bay Area. It adopted a qualitative multi-case study approach, analysing two mature, high-quality joint doctoral programmes to reflect local collaborative education features. The research established an integrated framework combining student, knowledge and talent hubs with core doctoral education mechanisms covering admissions, teaching-research integration, curriculum design, supervision and funding. The findings revealed that cross-border doctoral programmes boosted the GBA's regional development and global academic competitiveness. This research optimised the framework for interpreting regional cross-institutional education dynamics and provided evidence-based suggestions for institutional development and policy-making, supporting the sustainable internationalisation of GBA collaborative doctoral education and offering useful global references.

- 17:00 (Online) — **Agata Lambrechts** (Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training): **Challenges as a Transnational Governance Means in European Education and Training. The cases of the European Universities Initiative and Centres of Vocational Excellence**

Description: Grand challenges like the climate crisis, demographic change, and social inequality are central to EU policymaking. We examine how these challenges function as transnational governance means within European education and training (E&T) policy, focusing on two emblematic Erasmus+ initiatives: the European Universities initiative and the Centres of Vocational Excellence. Drawing on governance scholarship, we conceptualise 'challenges' not merely as problem-framing devices, but as means of transnational governance, which captures EU influence in E&T by integrating resources, relationships, and reconfigured authority into a distinct coordination logic. Through content analysis of EU documents, we find that challenges operate via three reinforcing, non-sequential dimensions: orienting collective action, mobilising diverse stakeholders, and justifying new multi-actor approaches. Ultimately, deploying challenges enables EU steering of E&T policy.

- 17:30 (On-site) — **Kaisa Kurki** (Tampere University): **Finnish universities' decision-making and organisational behaviour in strategic internationalisation**

Description: During the performance agreement period of 2021 - 2024, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture changed the steering of internationalisation by removing prior internationalisation indicators from the universities' core funding model and introducing programme-based strategic internationalisation funding. This study investigates the institution-level decision-making processes and organisational behaviour of Finnish case universities as they implement the national higher education internationalisation policy steered by the performance-based funding. Expert interviews, document analysis and statistical data are utilized shed light into the universities internal processes both in the agreement negotiation phase and the implementation phase of the case universities.

Track 3: Equity, Wellbeing, Academic Work, and Graduate Futures | B1083

- 16:30 (On-site) — **Keyu Zhai** (Lingnan University): **Graduate Employability Paradox in the Greater Bay Area: An Empirical Study of STEM Master's Students from Sino-foreign Collaborative Universities**

Description: This presentation examines the STEM master's employability paradox in GBA transnational programs, where international prestige clashes with short-term graduation metrics. Comparing three settings including a Hong Kong university, its mainland branch, and a joint institute, it tests if preparedness varies across contexts. Framed by employability, governance, and transnational theories, the model uses institutional context as IV, preparedness as DV, and resource exposure as mediator. Surveying senior students, SPSS analysis includes ANOVA, regression, and mediation. Findings show preparedness differs across contexts, challenging branding-centric views by revealing advantage stems from resources, not labels. The study questions assumptions that transnational education automatically boosts outcomes, as prestige depends on local recognition, framing the paradox as an institutional governance problem where developmental goals conflict with short-term rewards.

- 17:00 (On-site) — **Weiyan Xiong** (Education University of Hong Kong): **Career development of early-career researchers through sustainability competencies: An exploratory qualitative study of doctoral students at a Hong Kong university**

Description: This study explores Hong Kong doctoral students' perceptions of the value of sustainability competencies in academic career development and the factors influencing their acquisition. A qualitative case study was conducted with 18 doctoral students at a Hong Kong public university, using semi-structured interviews and a reflexive thematic approach to collect and analyse data. Participating doctoral students recognized sustainability competencies as a combination of soft skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, networking) and hard skills (e.g., systematic thinking, strategic planning, adaptability) critical for navigating the precarious academic job market and achieving long-term career resilience. However, their understanding remained fragmented, with competencies often tied to immediate research tasks rather than holistic career development, reflecting a disconnect between formal education and career requirements.

- 17:30 (Online) — **Evelyn De Ita** (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla): **Understanding Academic Precarity: A Systematic Literature Review Across the Global North and Global South**

Description: This systematic review examines how precarity in higher education is conceptualized across the Global North and South, focusing on Europe and Latin America. Using the PRISMA model, it compares four analytical axes: definitions of precarity; disciplinary and methodological approaches; causes and consequences; and underexplored gaps. Despite growing use of the term amid technological shifts, funding cuts, and political instability, no consensus exists on its meaning. By highlighting regional similarities, differences, and epistemic blind spots, the paper advances debates on governance, equity, and inclusion. A clearer conceptual framework is essential for better research and targeted responses to the conditions facing academic workers today.

18:00–18:30 — Break / move to reception | B1123

18:30 onwards — Conference cocktail reception | B1123