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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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SYMPOSIUM 27 - 29 JULY 2026

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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure and a profound sense of purpose that we present this Book of Abstracts, a compilation of scholarly contributions to the International Symposium on Higher Education Leadership, Innovation and Capacity Development, held from 27 to 29 July 2026 in the Republic of Mauritius. This publication stands as a testament to the richness of ideas, the diversity of perspectives, and the collaborative spirit that defined our gathering.

The symposium was conceived as a vital confluence of minds - scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers - united by a shared commitment to addressing the most pressing challenges and opportunities facing higher education today. From strategic leadership and research excellence to entrepreneurship education, capacity development, artificial intelligence, and micro-credentials, the thematic pillars of this symposium reflect the evolving and increasingly complex landscape of global higher education.

The abstracts contained in this volume represent the depth and breadth of expertise assembled across three intensive days of dialogue and exchange. They offer critical insights into how institutions, nations, and regions are navigating transformation, fostering innovation, and building sustainable capacity for the future. Whether examining the ethical implications of generative AI, the imperatives of inclusive leadership, the design of entrepreneurial ecosystems, or the promise of micro-credentials for lifelong learning, each contribution advances our collective understanding of how higher education can remain relevant, equitable, and impactful.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the symposium organising institutions - the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Science & Research of Mauritius; the VUB EU-CHINA and LEAD NETWORK of Belgium; the UNESCO Research Centre at Zhejiang University; the UNESCO Chair, EE-Net China Chapter; SICDA -Swedish International Capacity Development Academy; the Mauritius Institute of Education; the University of Mauritius; and the Open University of Mauritius. Their vision and steadfast commitment made this symposium a reality. A special note of appreciation is extended to our sponsors, whose generous support was instrumental in bringing together this diverse community of scholars and practitioners, and in creating an environment conducive to meaningful dialogue and exchange. Their commitment to advancing higher education and fostering international collaboration is deeply valued.

To the authors and presenters whose work fills these pages, we offer our sincere appreciation. Your scholarship, rigour, and passion are the cornerstone of this symposium and the foundation upon which future collaborations will be built.

We hope this Book of Abstracts serves not only as a record of what was shared but also as an inspiration for what lies ahead. May the ideas contained herein spark new research, forge lasting partnerships, and contribute to the transformation of higher education across borders and generations.

Prof. (Emeritus) Vinayagum Chinapah
International Coordinator

Dr. Shakeel M. C. Atchia
National Coordinator

July 2026, Mauritius

KEYNOTES & PAPER PRESENTATIONS

From Capacity Building Towards Capacity Development: Lessons Learned over Half a Century, 1972–2026

Professor Vinayagum Chinapah

SICDA - Swedish International Capacity Development Academy



In an era of rapid global change, the adequacy of traditional Capacity Building (Dependency Mode) as a framework for Higher Education Reform, Research, Innovation, Networking, and Inclusivity has become increasingly untenable. Drawing upon more than five decades of engaged scholarship across more than 140 countries — including leadership of landmark UNESCO-UNICEF comparative assessment programs and collaborative research in 80 countries of Africa, Asia, the Arab States, Latin America, and Europe. This address proposes fundamental paradigm shift in how the international community conceptualizes and operationalizes support for higher education systems worldwide.

The traditional paradigm of Capacity Building rests on the assumption that solutions, designs, and expertise must flow unidirectionally from the Global North toward the Global South. Capacity Development (Empowerment Mode) is advocated instead, as a transformative alternative paradigm: one that begins with, builds upon, and sustains local strengths, knowledge systems, and ownership along its four integrated and mutually reinforcing components — the 4Cs Framework: (i) Capacity Searching, which foregrounds the systematic identification and valorization of existing local and regional expertise; (ii) Capacity Sharing, which promotes genuine cross-border, cross-institutional, and cross-disciplinary exchange between equal partners; (iii) Capacity Strengthening, which builds upon and consolidates indigenous competencies rather than supplanting them; and (iv) Capacity Sustaining, which ensures the long-term durability and locally driven ownership of all development outcomes.

Its effective implementation demands strong and visionary leadership, deep institutional commitment to cross-border and cross-disciplinary teamwork, and a determined rejection of the silo mentality that continues to impede progress across professional and academic environments worldwide.

Keywords: Capacity Development, Inclusivity, Research, Innovation, Networking

Bridging Policy and Practice: Advancing Competency-Based Education through Innovation, Assessment, and Quality Assurance for 2030

Professor Stig Arne Skjerven

UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education /
Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills



Leadership in higher education is not a solitary act. It is the work of building partnerships across borders. No country can develop a strong system in isolation, and the central task of leadership today is cooperation: the sharing of students, research and ideas between nations. This keynote argues that such cooperation rests on a single foundation, which is trust between very different education systems.

The keynote sets out a clear chain of reasoning. Quality leads to trust, trust leads to recognition, recognition unlocks mobility, and mobility deepens cooperation between nations. Quality assurance is presented not as a burden but as a bridge: the means by which a degree earned in one country can be understood and relied upon in another. The hardest leadership challenge is to make quality assurance strong enough to inspire confidence while remaining flexible enough to respect the diversity of institutions.

This chain is now underpinned by global law. The UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications is the first United Nations treaty of its kind in higher education, establishing that qualifications should be recognised unless there is a substantial difference. Around 100 countries have now ratified either the Global Convention or a regional convention, and some have ratified both, making this a truly global movement that includes China, African nations, Europe and small island states such as the host, Mauritius.

The keynote closes with a direct call to leaders: build trust, strengthen quality assurance, recognise the qualifications of others fairly, and cooperate openly. Done well, this turns education into a force for peace and shared progress, a true win-win. The address poses questions on trust, responsibility for recognition, and the practical steps institutions can take this year.

Integrating ChatGPT into Teaching: Empirical Insights from a Faculty Development Project in Brussels

Professor Chang Zhu

Vrije Universiteit Brussel & LEAD Academic Network



This empirical paper reports findings from a project involving 10 early-career university faculty members in Brussels, focused on integrating ChatGPT into classroom teaching. Drawing on qualitative feedback, classroom practices, and feedback from the faculty development project, the study identifies effective strategies, challenges, and institutional needs related to AI integration. Practical approaches include AI-assisted brainstorming, low-stakes assignments, and critical analysis of AI-generated texts. While participants observed increased student engagement and metacognitive awareness, concerns about overreliance and misinformation remained. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations for faculty and institutions supporting the pedagogical use of generative AI.

Introduction

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are reshaping the educational landscape. For early-career faculty members, the question is not merely whether to allow AI, but how to integrate it meaningfully into pedagogy. The literature highlights both potential benefits (e.g., enhanced engagement, efficiency, and creativity) and risks (e.g., academic integrity issues, factual inaccuracies) (Wang & Fan, 2025; Revell et al., 2024). This paper presents findings from a faculty development initiative involving 10 early-career instructors across disciplines such as literature, history, and philosophy. The project aimed to support the experimental use of ChatGPT in teaching and evaluate outcomes from both teacher and student perspectives.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative action research design. Ten early-career instructors from a university in Brussels were supported over a semester with workshops, mentoring, and peer discussion forums. Each participant integrated ChatGPT into at least one course. Data included teacher reflections, student surveys, and samples of classroom artifacts. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and insights.

The findings of this study were generated through a qualitative thematic analysis of data collected from ten early-career instructors participating in the project. Each faculty member integrated ChatGPT into at least one of their courses and provided reflective teaching journals, annotated lesson materials, and examples of student work. Complementary data were gathered from a total of 90 student feedback

surveys, which included both Likert-scale items and open-ended responses. The research team employed a two-stage coding process. First, open coding was used to identify recurring patterns and notable experiences within each dataset. This was followed by axial coding to organize these patterns into broader thematic categories that reflected common pedagogical strategies, perceived challenges, and institutional needs. Themes were iteratively refined through peer debriefing among the research team to enhance consistency and reliability. This process led to the emergence of seven major findings, which are elaborated in the next section.

Keywords: AI integration, higher education, faculty development, digital leadership

Education Leadership, Research and Innovation in Higher Education

Dr Teshome Nekatibeb Begna

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Higher education institutions across the world are operating in an environment characterized by rapid technological change, increasing demands for accountability, shifting labor market expectations, and growing pressure to contribute to national development. Consequently, universities responding remodeling their traditional roles and strengthen their capacity to lead educational transformation through effective leadership, knowledge generation, and innovation. This paper examines the evolving relationship between education leadership, research, and innovation in shaping the future of higher education.

Drawing on emerging trends in higher education reform, the paper argues that institutional transformation requires more than structural change. It requires leadership that is visionary, adaptive, and evidence-informed; research that addresses real societal and educational challenges; and innovation that enhances teaching, learning, governance, and community engagement. Contemporary reforms increasingly emphasize competency-based education, digital transformation, interdisciplinary collaboration, internationalization, and stronger links between universities and society. These developments are redefining how higher education institutions organize themselves, develop human capital, and contribute to sustainable development.

The paper further explores the growing role of universities as centers of policy influence, professional development, and educational innovation. In an era marked by artificial intelligence, globalization, and expanding demands for quality and equity, higher education institutions must foster research cultures that generate practical solutions while promoting creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. Equally important is the need for governance and leadership models that support institutional autonomy, accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

The paper concludes that the future relevance of higher education will depend on the successful integration of educational leadership, research excellence, and innovation capacity. Universities that effectively align these three dimensions will be better positioned to respond to emerging challenges, enhance educational quality, and contribute meaningfully to social, economic, and human development in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Keywords: Competency-Based Education; Digital Transformation; Educational Leadership, Higher Education Reform, Institutional Governance, Research and Innovation.

From Campus to Global Stage: An Exploratory Study of Chinese Interns' Global Competency in International Organizations

Professor Yue Kan

Zhejiang University



Internships in international organizations are highly valued for the development of global competency. Drawing on the combination of the United Nations Competencies for the Future and the onion competency model as a theoretical framework, this study examines the global competency of Chinese university students by conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with 44 interns stationed at international organizations. The thematic analysis reveals that the global competency of Chinese interns in international organizations is characterized as multifaceted, which characterized by high level of professionalism, underdeveloped communication competencies, practical competency gaps and creativity deficiency from a knowledge and skills perspective. In terms of roles and attitudes, Chinese interns tend to view the internship as international civil servants and display a growth mindset. Regarding motivations and personality, they exhibit a high degree of intercultural disposition and demonstrate a combination of cosmopolitan identity and patriotism. Strategic implications are discussed regarding how Chinese universities cultivate students' global competency, particularly as an adaptive response to the shifting complexities of a globalized and multi-polar world.

Keywords: global competency, international internship, work integrated learning, international organizations

Higher Education Leadership for Viksit Bharat 2047: Emerging Trends, Policy Reforms, and Comparative Perspectives from Asia

Professor Karanam Pushpanadham

The Maharaja Sayajirao University Of Baroda



The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 positions higher education as a strategic driver of national development, innovation, social transformation, and global competitiveness. As nations increasingly transition toward knowledge-based economies, higher education institutions are expected to play a central role in developing human capital, advancing research and innovation, promoting social inclusion, and addressing complex global challenges. Within this context, leadership has emerged as a critical determinant of institutional effectiveness and systemic transformation. The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has ushered in a new era of higher education reform in India, emphasizing multidisciplinary learning, institutional autonomy, internationalization, research excellence, digital transformation, and holistic governance. These developments call for a reimagining of higher education leadership capable of navigating unprecedented institutional, societal, and technological changes.

This paper examines the evolving landscape of higher education leadership in India through a comparative analysis of selected Asian countries and Global South higher education systems. It seeks to address four critical questions: (i) How is higher education leadership evolving in response to the transformative agenda of NEP 2020 and Viksit Bharat 2047? (ii) What leadership models and governance practices have enabled successful higher education transformation in Asia and the Global South? (iii) What structural, cultural, and policy factors shape leadership effectiveness in diverse higher education contexts? and (iv) How can India

leverage international experiences while building contextually relevant leadership frameworks aligned with its developmental aspirations?

Drawing upon policy analysis, comparative higher education literature, governance reports, and emerging reform initiatives, the paper situates India within broader international debates on university leadership and governance. The study compares leadership trends and institutional transformation strategies in leading Asian systems such as Singapore, China, South Korea, Malaysia, and Japan, alongside selected Global South countries including South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia, and Vietnam. These countries provide valuable insights into how higher education leadership can contribute to national development through strategic governance, institutional autonomy, research ecosystems, international partnerships, and innovation-led growth.

The analysis reveals that while leadership reforms across Asia and the Global South have followed diverse trajectories, successful systems share common characteristics: strong institutional vision, leadership development pathways, strategic autonomy, stakeholder engagement, accountability mechanisms, and the ability to balance global competitiveness with local relevance. In comparison, India's higher education reforms are distinguished by their scale, democratic governance structure,

commitment to equity and inclusion, and the ambitious transformation agenda articulated through NEP 2020. The paper argues that India is uniquely positioned to emerge as a global knowledge leader by combining international best practices with indigenous strengths, including its demographic dividend, expanding digital infrastructure, vibrant academic ecosystem, and growing emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship.

The paper further highlights emerging trends in higher education leadership, including distributed leadership, digital governance, entrepreneurial university models, internationalization strategies, sustainability-oriented leadership, and data-informed decision-making. It proposes a policy framework for strengthening leadership capacity through competency-based appointments, continuous professional development, leadership succession planning, enhanced institutional autonomy, and the establishment of national and regional leadership academies. Particular emphasis is placed on developing leadership models that are responsive to the socio-economic realities of the Global South while simultaneously engaging with global standards of excellence.

The paper concludes that the realization of Viksit Bharat 2047 will depend not only on policy reforms and institutional expansion but also on the emergence of visionary, transformational, and socially responsive leaders capable of driving systemic change. By learning from both Asian success stories and broader Global South experiences, India has the opportunity to develop a distinctive model of higher education leadership that combines academic excellence, social responsibility, innovation, and nation-building. Such a model can contribute significantly to positioning India as a leading knowledge society and an influential voice in shaping the future of higher education in the Global South.

Keywords: Higher Education Leadership, Viksit Bharat 2047, National Education Policy 2020, Comparative Higher Education, Asian Higher Education, Global South, University Governance, Transformational Leadership, Institutional Autonomy, Higher Education Reform, Knowledge Society.

The Experiential Ecosystem for Entrepreneurship Education at “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania

Professor Alexandru Capatana and Professor Kesseven Padachi

University of Technology, Mauritius



Entrepreneurship education is increasingly expected to move beyond traditional classroom instruction and provide students with authentic opportunities to develop entrepreneurial mindsets, practical competencies, and confidence in navigating uncertain business environments. This presentation outlines the experiential approach to entrepreneurship education implemented at “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania, highlighting a portfolio of complementary practices designed to connect academic learning with real entrepreneurial challenges.

The university’s approach reflects practice enterprises, direct meetings with entrepreneurs, company field visits, business plan competitions, and participation in national and international innovation challenges. Students are also involved in virtual incubation activities that expose them to collaborative venture development and mentoring processes. Digital and game-based learning further enrich this ecosystem through the use of the DIG gamification platform for entrepreneurship and the Playground for Entrepreneurs board game, which encourages experiential learning, strategic thinking, teamwork, and decision-making in simulated business contexts. Together, these initiatives create a progression from knowledge acquisition to active experimentation, interaction with the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and participation in competitive and collaborative learning environments.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education; Experiential Learning; Romania

Higher Education Leadership in the Age of the Attention Economy

Professor Hyleen Mariaye

Mauritius Institute of Education UNESCO Chair, Higher Education



This presentation engages with how higher education leadership is currently being reconfigured at the exclusive service of industry. As pressures for universities to buckle to the demands of the attention economy and the AI hype intensify, leadership responses have been increasingly homogenised. I analyse the political, cultural and academic underpinnings which explain why HEIs are morphing from organised anarchy to performative bureaucracy. Drawing on McGilchrist's distinction between left and right hemisphere modes of attending to the world (2009, 2021), I argue that this crisis is not merely political or cultural but neurological in its metaphor: higher education leadership has progressively surrendered to left hemisphere dominance while systematically suppressing the right hemisphere capacities of wisdom, imagination, tolerance of ambiguity and genuine attention to the human. The closing part reflects on what a restoration of right hemisphere leadership might look like and whether universities still have the institutional courage to imagine it.

Key words: Higher education, Attention, AI, Leadership

How Organisational Dimensions Shape Leadership for Internationalisation at Universities?

Dr Zhengwen Qi, Dr Laura Pizzirani and Professor Chang Zhu

Vrije Universiteit Brussel



Problem Statement: Internationalisation is increasingly expected to advance universities' global relevance, educational quality, and institutional resilience. Yet, amid geopolitical uncertainty and intensified demands for meaningful international engagement, leadership for internationalisation is often discussed as a matter of individual competence or strategic ambition, with insufficient attention to the organisational conditions that enable or constrain action. This study aims to narrow this gap by investigating which organisational dimensions shape leadership for internationalisation, and through what mechanisms?

Methodology: The study combines Fumasoli et al.'s framework of organisational dimensions with Scott's three institutional pillars to develop an organisationally grounded analysis of leadership. It draws on semi-structured interviews with 30 university leaders involved in internationalisation across 16 universities in seven countries. Interview data were thematically analysed to identify recurrent organisational influences on leadership enactment.

Key Findings: The findings show that organisational structure, identity, and centrality do not merely provide a background for leadership, they actively configure how internationalisation is authorised, interpreted, and implemented. Four leadership enactment mechanisms emerged: compliance-driven, academic-profession-driven, culture-driven, and distinctiveness-driven mechanisms. The analysis reveals that regulation can both facilitate coordinated internationalisation and restrict locally meaningful initiatives. It further suggests that the growing normative emphasis on substantive internationalisation may unintentionally privilege already well-positioned institutions. Conversely, universities can strengthen their international role by transforming distinctive local histories, disciplinary expertise, and regional relationships into strategic assets.

Relevance: Positioned within the symposium theme of higher educational leadership, research and innovation, this study offers a context-sensitive understanding of leadership enactment. Rather than prescribing a universal model, it provides leaders and policymakers with an analytical lens for designing internationalisation strategies that are innovative, realistic, and responsive to organisational realities in uncertain times.

Keywords: Higher Education Internationalisation; University Leadership; Organisational Dimensions; Institutional development

Strategic Curriculum Leadership Begins with Educational Purpose: Reflections from the Review of an Indian Philosophy Programme

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Mahatma Gandhi Institute



The current world context has been characterised by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity or VUCA. Unrelenting pace of digital revolution and exponential progress of technology are considered primary drivers of VUCA. Coupled with unpredictable environmental challenges, geopolitical tensions and ongoing conflicts around the world, navigating into the VUCA world is becoming dangerously challenging for contemporary societies. It will be even more for future generations! In such a context, what kind of graduates should Higher Education Institutions aim to produce? While current discussions foreground skills, employability and adaptability, they also invite a deeper interrogation: What is the enduring educational purpose of an academic discipline and what kind of human being it seeks to cultivate? The paper contends that more than a technical exercise, curriculum transformation is, a priori, a philosophical enterprise - presupposing a deeper reflection on the nature of the human person and the types of capabilities it aims to nurture. The argument is developed through an evidence-informed conceptual analysis based on the strategic review of the BA (Hons) Indian Philosophy programme undertaken by the Department of Philosophy, MGI. The review synthesised higher education policy, graduate capability literature and labour market evidence before mapping these against the educational resources of the discipline. The review suggests that the discipline fosters enduring human capabilities like ethical discernment, metacognitive self-regulation, logical reasoning, pluralistic dialogue, ecological awareness and reflective self-knowledge. To conclude, the paper invites academic leaders to view curriculum transformation not as an institutional response to external change but as an opportunity to revise the educational purpose of academic disciplines while preparing future-ready graduates.

Keywords: Curriculum Leadership, Educational Purpose, Future-Ready Graduates, Indian Philosophy.

Emergencies are Becoming Regular in Higher Education: Decoding the Leadership Trends towards a Proposed Leadership Assessment and Development Framework

Dr Mrinal Mukherjee

Baba Saheb Ambedkar Education University



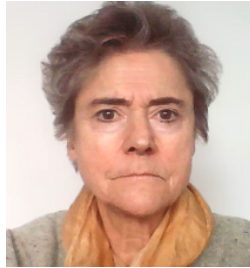
Globally emergencies are increasing and becoming regular in the educational landscape. either natural or anthropogenic in nature. While health emergencies, climate catastrophes, and warlike situations are becoming the new normal, leading to emergencies for HEIs have brought drastic changes affecting all aspects of higher education. Higher education leadership must adapt innovations to address challenges turned up in such emergency-like situations, including institutional closure, and make swift judgments, with the well-being of all stakeholders as the sacrosanct objective. The COVID-19 mediated pandemic has put a question mark on the preparedness for emergencies in higher education. Individual safety and socio-emotional wellbeing are non-negotiable, which form the ethical foundation in higher education governance in an emergency. The study critically examined evolving leadership trends to explore what is effective in the unique context, what could have been done better, and how leaders may prepare for future catastrophes exploring data from India, as a case. In this qualitative enquiry, data were purposively collected from the highest-level academic leaders of diverse HEIs. Using inductive coding, the transcripts were analysed. The study revealed that early comprehension and indigenous critical analysis were lacking in academic institutions. Academic leaders manage human resources and ensure functionality through effective actions and transparent communication. HE leaders prioritised operational decisions immediately, though reactive responses, lack of strategic preparedness and proactive leadership are the outcome of a culture of ad-hoc-ism, and substantial delays in technology adoption surfaced as major challenges in emergency education. The study recommends institutional and methodological restructuring to ensure the future resilience of higher education, including institutionalising an anticipatory, initiative-driven leadership paradigm, a decentralised yet coordinated decision-making mechanism, and proactive digital transformation strategies to address large-scale crises. The research proposed a contextualised leadership assessment and development framework and autonomy-guided governance, which could serve as adaptable models beyond India's borders, contributing to the global discourse on academic crisis preparedness for policy making.

Keywords: leadership trends, Qualitative enquiry, Operational decisions, Reactive leadership, Leadership assessment, Academic crisis preparedness

Higher Education Leadership in PhD Research

Professor Karen François

Vrije Universiteit



The era in which doctoral research was conducted primarily within the confines of a dyadic relationship between a doctoral researcher and a single supervisor has largely passed. Over the past two decades, doctoral education has undergone a profound transformation across Europe (Bologna Declaration 1999, 2003 and Salzburg Principles 2005, 2010), which articulated a common framework for doctoral education aimed at fostering research excellence, enhancing quality assurance, and preparing highly qualified researchers for diverse career pathways.

Contemporary doctoral education is increasingly characterized by structured programmes, distributed forms of supervision, and institutional responsibility for researcher development. Although the supervisor remains a pivotal actor in the doctoral journey, the traditional master–apprentice model has gradually evolved into a more complex and collaborative system of support. Doctoral researchers are now typically guided by supervisory committees and supported through institutional doctoral training programmes. These programmes extend beyond disciplinary and methodological expertise to encompass transferable skills, professional competencies, leadership development, and career preparation.

This evolution reflects a shared institutional responsibility involving supervisors, doctoral schools, university leadership, and external stakeholders. Consequently, effective doctoral education increasingly depends on coordinated approaches to supervision, training, mentoring, and career development.

In this contribution, we examine a Belgian case study, namely the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), which has developed a comprehensive and innovative approach to doctoral supervision, doctoral training, and researcher development. We present practical tools that can be implemented directly within the supervisory relationship (profiles of effective supervisors/doctoral researchers and instruments designed to facilitate dialogue).

Finally, we consider the role of public policy. In an increasingly knowledge-driven economy, investments in researcher development constitute an important component of innovation policy and human capital development. This perspective aligns with broader European ambitions to strengthen research capacity and societal growth through strategic investments in talent and research excellence.

Keywords: Doctoral Education, Supervision, Practical tools, case study

**University Governance in Mozambican Public Higher Education Institutions:
The case of UNISAVE**

Catarina Tivane Nhamposse and Alberto Augusto Macuácuá

Save University (UniSave)-Mozambique

This study addresses university governance, analysing how higher education institutions (HEIs) organize, function, and relate to the external world. The theme gains relevance in light of global management reforms in public higher education institutions (PHEIs), marked by the shift from the collegial model to the adoption of corporate practices (EDWARDS, 2000; MEEK and DAVIES, 2009; SANTOS, 2013; BRUCKMANN and CARVALHO, 2014). The article analyses governance processes in Mozambique, focusing on Save University (UniSave) and the impacts of the strategies adopted to address new management models. The first part reflects on management influences and funding challenges for the sustainability of PHEIs. The second part presents an empirical study on the participation of the university community within an inclusive governance framework. The qualitative methodology evaluated management characterization, the participation of faculty, administrative technical staff, and students, organizational structure, the human resources development plan, financial management, and internal and external evaluations. The results establish lines of strength and conclusive summaries regarding the institution. It demonstrates that, despite fiscal austerity and the reduction of public resources, UniSave fulfills its mission to train quality professionals who contribute sustainably. This is the result of decentralized, participatory, inclusive, and transparent governance policies, articulated with alternative financing modalities.

Keywords: University Governance and Management, Higher Education, University Community, Collegial Bodies

Responsive strategic leadership: Onto-epistemic deliberations on globalization and the internationalization of higher education amidst real-world challenges

Dr Tejwant Mohabeer

Mauritius Institute of Education

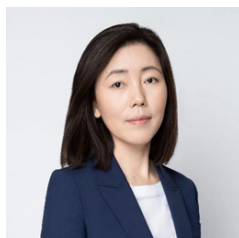
Although the term globalization was popularized in the 1980s, its origins and processes were rapidly accelerated during European colonization. While globalization has been lauded for driving unprecedented economic growth through international trade and investment and hastening the deployment of technologies vis-à-vis multinational corporations, the world continues to face real-world challenges rooted in global poverty, global “resource wars” (Klare, 2001), environmental destruction, displacement, geopolitical conflicts, humanitarian crises, economic instability, and global inequality. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have the prospect to serve as central catalysts to address real-world challenges through the advanced research and critical teaching nexus. However, globalization and related geo-politico-economic policies have pressurized HEIs across the globe to be market/industry-driven and serve the capitalistic knowledge-economy thus precluding addressing the real-world challenges. Within the Global South, these challenges are further exacerbated given that European colonizers supplanted local/national HEIs with onto-epistemically Eurocentric HEIs to serve their own geo-politico-economic needs. Colonization prevails in the Global South under the guise of internationalization through international partnerships, programs, branch campuses, and staff recruitment thus throttling the authority and autonomy of local HEIs within the Global South. This presentation calls for the critical enactment of responsive strategic leadership to address the real-world issues from a local emic perspective given that local leaders have the necessary insider’s vantage point, experiences and understandings of the local contextual realities. While this presentation is theoretical in scope, it also draws on the findings of two national research studies conducted in Mauritius focusing on globalization and quality assurance respectively in which it was found that local leaders lacked an understanding of globalization and its contribution to real-world challenges in their local context and across HEIs thus impacting agentic decision-making and the trajectory of the selected strategic enactment.

Keywords: globalization, internationalization, higher education, responsive leadership

From Blueprint to Agency: University Leadership and Knowledge Partnerships for Global Agendas

Dr Yan Wang

Beijing Foreign Studies University



Problem Statement: Cascading global crises—climate change, pandemics, conflicts, and rising inequality—have outpaced traditional multilateral responses. While the UN Pact for the Future (a landmark 2024 agreement with 56 concrete actions to accelerate the SDGs and close global governance gaps) provides a shared blueprint, high-level political commitments have yet to translate into tangible implementation at national, local, and institutional levels.

Methodology/Approach: This presentation draws on recent high-level deliberations among university leaders and UN officials, analyzing institutional challenges and emerging strategies for aligning higher education’s core missions with the demands of global governance. It synthesizes principles for restructuring research, teaching, and cross-sector partnerships, with a specific focus on the leadership roles universities must assume.

Key Idea/Findings: Universities must move from neutral observers to active agents, serving as indispensable “knowledge partners” through strategic leadership. Three interconnected shifts are identified: First, redefining the university’s role through networked multilateralism—building coalitions that connect rather than duplicate expertise, with university leaders acting as conveners and facilitators. Second, navigating the dual-sided AI frontier by harnessing its potential for equity and personalized learning while countering risks of deepened digital divides, compromised academic integrity, and the conflation of information with knowledge—requiring leadership in ethical AI governance. Third, championing epistemic justice by fostering inclusive knowledge co-creation across diverse institutional and cultural contexts, moving towards genuine partnership and mutual learning. University leadership is central to each shift, translating global agendas into institutional strategies and cultivating “glocal” competencies across all levels.

Relevance: This framework directly addresses the symposium’s focus on leadership, innovation, and capacity development by offering a concrete action framework for university leaders to translate global agendas into institutional strategies—embedding AI ethics, designing resilient transnational partnerships beyond transactional exchange, and leading the transition from content transmission to human formation.

Keywords: Networked multilateralism; AI in higher education; Epistemic justice; Glocal competencies

Strategic Partnerships for Resilient Technical Universities

Professor Marcin Górski and Professor Anna Waligóra

Silesian University of Technology (SUT)



The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has significantly transformed the teaching and learning process, particularly in creative subjects like Art and Design. This transformation has introduced new ways to enhance creativity, engagement, and learning outcomes among students. However, effectively implementing these digital tools requires a comprehensive understanding of how they are perceived and utilized by educators. This study explores the experiences and perceptions of in-service teachers enrolled in a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) program, focusing specifically on their engagement with two online educational tools: Canvas and Kahoot. A mixed-method approach will be employed, combining quantitative data from questionnaires with qualitative insights from focus group discussions (FGDs). The sample consists of 40 trainee teachers who have completed the ICT module. The questionnaires will gather data on their familiarity, usage, and perceived effectiveness of Canvas and Kahoot, while the FGDs will provide deeper insights into their experiences and potential challenges faced during implementation. Ethical considerations, such as obtaining research ethics approval and safeguarding participant confidentiality, will be rigorously adhered to. Preliminary findings from the literature suggest that both Canvas and Kahoot positively impact student engagement and creativity in Art and Design education by offering interactive and visually stimulating learning environments. However, the full extent of these benefits, as well as the challenges encountered by Art and Design educators in implementing these tools in schools in Mauritius will be further explored and confirmed through this study. This research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on ICT in education by providing practical insights into the integration of digital tools in Art and Design curricula. The findings are expected to inform educators and policymakers about the benefits and challenges of incorporating such technologies in the classroom, ultimately aiming to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in Art and Design education.

Keywords: Higher Education Partnership Strategies, Institutional Resilience, Quadruple Helix Model, Higher Education Transformation

**Developing and Validating the Mauritian Higher Education Quality (MHEQUAL)
Model: Shifting the Focus from Rankings to Continuous Quality Improvement**

Dr Viraiyan Teeroovengadum, Dr Boopen Seetanah, Dr Swaleha Peeroo

Dr Jinot Belle, Prof (Dr) Padachi, Noorjahan Teeluckdharry and Prof (Dr) Hamish Coates

University of Mauritius

Higher education institutions increasingly need quality measures that move beyond international university rankings to reflect national priorities and the full mission of universities. This study developed and validated the Mauritian Higher Education Quality (MHEQUAL) Model, a composite-indicator framework to support continuous quality improvement across the Mauritian higher education sector. The model is organised around three core mandates of HEIs: Quality of Education (knowledge dissemination), Quality of Research (knowledge creation), and Quality of Professional Practice and Community Service (knowledge application). Those core dimensions are operationalised through weighted sub-dimensions and indices which include student experience, academic staff resources, educational outcomes, research output and impact, and community engagement.

The various indices were constructed and calculated based on data obtained from multiple sources, including: surveys of students, academic staff, and employers; institutional and secondary data from participating HEIs; bibliometric analysis; and expert-panel evaluations. Structural equation modelling tested the measurement models and determined weights for computation of composite scores. Following the quality assessment which provide the voice of the stakeholders, Quality Function Deployment (QFD) was used to match those with technical specifications. The technical specifications were identified through a set of focus groups with multiple stakeholders, and the house of quality enabled the findings to be prioritised and produce a set of improvement actions.

The results reveal key areas for improvement while also acknowledging the present strength of HEI services. For example, while students generally rate some aspects of teaching and learning quality such as lecture delivery to be high, other aspects such as individualised attention is rated as being relatively low. Academics are generally not satisfied with components such as research climate and conditions of employment. Employers are relatively satisfied but expect more proactiveness. Research bibliometrics show that most indicators are below comparable international benchmarks. Building on these findings, the study proposes a roadmap for embedding MHEQUAL within the higher education sector quality assurance ecosystem through institutional level and national level dashboards, benchmarking, and a regular annual review and action cycle.

Keywords: higher education; quality assurance; structural equation modelling; Quality Function Deployment; performance evaluation

Empowering Mauritian Secondary School Students for a Technology-Driven Present and Future

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Higher education (HE) cultivates advanced knowledge, professional competencies, research acumen, innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Worldwide, HE has proliferated swiftly, with more than 250 million students registered in universities and colleges. The prevalence of online and digital learning surged following the COVID-19 epidemic. Research, artificial intelligence, sustainability, and innovation are global priorities. The United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, and Singapore dominate global higher education, whilst less affluent nations encounter obstacles stemming from conflict and inadequate infrastructure. Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore, and India are at the forefront in Asia. HE research is fundamental to generating inventiveness, raising educational outcomes, and overcoming difficult challenges in society, as well as developing critical thinking skills and increasing employability. It connects theory with practice, so enhancing a nation's economic and intellectual growth.

Research and innovation are essential to India's higher education system. They promote scientific progress, innovation, economic development, and analytical skills. Institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institute of Science, and Indian Space Research Organisation foster technology and creativity. Government efforts promote Artificial Intelligence, digital education, startups, entrepreneurship, and skill enhancement to further national development and global competitiveness. India supports arts, literature, commerce, economics, education, law, agriculture, management, social sciences, languages, culture, history, and public policy research in addition to scientific research. For national and cultural expansion, higher education institutions promote innovation in entrepreneurship, rural development, digital services, environmental studies, and social welfare. India gained global recognition through Chandrayaan-3, affordable vaccines, digital innovation, Artificial Intelligence, and space research. India also contributed to literature, medicine, agriculture, and archaeology through discoveries, heritage conservation, skilled professionals, startups, and sustainable development initiatives. This keynote writing used picturesque comparison to highlight India's research and innovation today in the HE context.

Keywords: Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Indian Higher Education, Research in Indian HE

Dutch disease: Coffee boom

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Many countries experienced a commodity boom during the 1970s and early 1980s. The 1970s was characterized by oil price shock, but this period also provide several examples of exceptional increases in non-oil price shock, for example beverages & bauxites (Jamaica), Sugar (Mauritius), Coffee (Brazil), Phosphates (Jamaica) among others. The export boom led to an increase in economic development and an improvement in the balance of payment. However, economists have stressed the adverse impact of these booms. For example, the primary commodity boom has been associated with the problem of enclaved development, expatriation of profits and minimal growth linkages of the export sector (see, for e.g. Hirschman, 1977; Peason and Cownie, 1974). In *Oil Windfalls: Blessings or Curse?* Alan Webb tentatively concludes that the oil prices increase of the 1970s may have made certain oil exporters worse off in the long run than they would have been with constant oil prices. In a similar vein, Auty (1993) in *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis* finds that the selected hard-rock minerals exporters did not respond well to the terms of trade shocks induced by the oil price shocks.

Despite the advantages that the export commodity boom has brought in many countries, there have been concerns for many years that these booms are not a problem-free rider of the development process. These concerns have often been corralled under the heading ‘Dutch Disease’. This term first made appearance when Netherlands’ tradables experienced a loss of competitiveness, particularly export competitiveness following the natural gas discoveries in the 1960s. Several countries suffer from Dutch Disease in the 1970s and 1980s. Apart from appreciation of the real exchange rate, commodity boom often cause other problems such as financial difficulties for exporters and misallocation of investment resources.

A boom causes a drain on non-booming exports through changes in spending and resource allocation. Commodity booms do more than shift profitability within the tradable sector by drawing resources from other sectors into the booming sector. They can also shift profitability from the tradables to non-tradables sector through the impact on real exchange rates.

Boom results in an increase in supply of foreign exchange which boosts the price of non-tradables to that of tradables. This currency overvaluation can persist after the boom and because the accumulated foreign exchange can reduce demand for foreign exchange for some time. Past commodity booms have been followed by sharp, long-lasting price declines. Profitability in the once-booming commodity shrinks severely, while the large real appreciation of the currency drags down other exports as well. Basically, the Dutch Disease, or in a more generic form, the ‘booming sector model’, therefore simply denotes the coexistence of the booming sector and lagging or shrinking sectors in an economy due

to a temporary or sustained increase in export earnings. Commodity booms can also worsen the government budget deficit. As a result of export commodity prices boom, government revenues can increase sharply. This encourages the government to embark on programs that are driven more by political considerations rather than economics one. The failure to cut spending when the commodity boom ends lead to external imbalances, fiscal and monetary disequilibrium and inflation. As a result, countries are worse off when the boom ends. The potential difficulties involved in relying on primary exports have long been the preoccupation of development economists. This paper elaborates the coffee boom impact on the top exporting countries. An econometrics analysis is warranted. Both static panel and dynamic panel will appli

Keywords: Dutch Disease, Panel Analysis, Resource Curse.

**Empowerment and tension: Global mirror and ecological iteration of big science projects
cultivating top-notch innovative talents**

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Under the background of globalization and the transformation of knowledge production modes, big science programs have been established as crucial arenas for cultivating top-notch innovative talents. This study selects four typical cases—the Human Genome Project (HGP), the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), the Deep-time Digital Earth Program (DDE), and the Square Kilometre Array (SKA)—and conducts a multi-case comparative analysis to systematically explore the internal mechanisms, institutional tensions, and optimized pathways through which big science programs empower the cultivation of top-notch innovative talents. It is found that big science programs facilitate talent development through the construction of authentic research scenarios, integration of collaborative resource networks, cultivation of transnational cooperation ecosystems, and design of progressive competency pathways, thereby forming a four-dimensional synergistic model characterized by research scenario–resource network–collaboration ecosystem–competency progression. However, in practice, this four-dimensional model is confronted with structural tensions, including the disconnection between research scenarios and the educational system, imbalanced resource allocation, outdated evaluation mechanisms, and geopolitical constraints, which collectively hinder its empowering effectiveness. Accordingly, the study proposes that big science programs should shift from project-based participation to ecosystem-based hosting. By interactively advancing a coherent cultivation system, a sustainable resource network, a resilient governance framework, and a globalized collaboration mechanism, a resilient innovation ecosystem can be constructed for sustainably nurturing future strategic scientists. This offers insights for China in promoting the integrated development of education, technology, and talent.

Keywords: Big science programs, top-notch innovative talents, four-dimensional collaborative model, empowerment effectiveness, ecological iteration

Engineering Sustainable Amino Acid-Based Surfactants: Advancing Green Chemistry through Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation

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The growing environmental and health concerns associated with petroleum-derived surfactants have accelerated the search for sustainable, biodegradable and biocompatible alternatives. Amino acid-based surfactants (AASs), synthesised from naturally occurring amino acids and renewable lipid sources, have emerged as a versatile class of functional materials because of their excellent surface activity, structural diversity, low toxicity and biodegradability.

Over the past decade, our research group has developed a multidisciplinary research programme dedicated to the molecular design, synthesis and functional evaluation of novel amino acid-based surfactants. By integrating green chemistry, materials science and pharmaceutical research, the programme has produced a diverse library of anionic, cationic, aromatic and cyclic surfactants with tailored physicochemical and biological properties. Their performance has been systematically investigated through studies on micellisation, detergency, foaming behaviour, antimicrobial activity, membrane interactions and enzyme inhibition. The aromatic AASs have shown particularly promising bioactivity, which is attributed to favourable π - π interactions and their spatial orientation.

The research has led to several innovative applications. Coconut oil-derived sodium cocoyl prolate has demonstrated excellent detergency, low-foaming behaviour suitable for energy-efficient laundry formulations, favourable enzyme compatibility and promising antibacterial activity. In parallel, the synthesised surfactants have shown potential as transdermal permeation enhancers for drug delivery and as acetylcholinesterase inhibitors, creating new opportunities for pharmaceutical applications, including therapies targeting neurodegenerative diseases. Ongoing research continues to explore their role as multifunctional drug delivery systems.

Overall, this work demonstrates how sustained research leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration can translate fundamental molecular design into innovative and sustainable technologies with applications in detergents, antimicrobial agents, drug delivery and therapeutic development. The presentation also highlights opportunities for collaborative research, knowledge exchange and capacity building in advancing bio-based functional materials for industrial and biomedical applications.

Keywords: Surfactants, Antimicrobial, Acetylcholine esterase inhibitors, Drug delivery

Franco-Indian Campus on Life Sciences and Health: The BIOSANTEXC Project - Indo-French Network of Excellence for Training and Research in Life Sciences through Interdisciplinary Approaches

Dr Karin Kim Lim

ENS de Lyon



While lifelong education is a popular concept favoured by all institutions with a view to enabling people to achieve continuous learning opportunities, life-wide education is a much lesser understood and appreciated concept. This concerns broad-based learning experiences that might offer better competences that not only foster new learning experiences but also contributes to well-developed holistic education. This paper examines the slow but sure diffusion of life-wide learning at the Université des Mascareignes (UdM), a public bilingual university in Mauritius. Within its formal curriculum, the university has developed industrial placement, soft skills development, entrepreneurship within the ‘Bootcamp’ project along with courses in Ethics and Social Responsibility. To this end, life-wide learning complements formal course curricula and exposes the student to a world where he/she can adapt himself/herself better to forthcoming workplace challenges. To further investigate the phenomenon, this study sampled out 100 students out of 300, in a final year programme. A questionnaire was then administered to analyse students’ perception of life-wide education. The epistemological assessment established that the diffusion of lifewide education enabled quick adaptation of students in their placement. This practice encouraged effective onboarding. Key study findings revealed that additional time, resources and flexibility were required for life-wide education, but these were surpassed by the benefits of such education. Similarly, respondents found it useful to have selected activities like talks by industry specialists, film and documentary shows with pedagogical content as well as wider reading opportunities in their blended courses, as clear evidence of the promotion of life-wide learning.

Keywords: Indo-French network, life sciences, research, mobility

Evaluating the Implementation of the Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills (FPLNS): Teachers' Perspectives on Inclusive Education in Mauritius

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Open University of Mauritius



The Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills (FPLNS), introduced in Mauritius in 2025, represents a major reform aimed at promoting inclusive education for learners experiencing learning difficulties and those at risk of school exclusion. While the programme seeks to improve educational equity through flexible teaching and vocationally oriented learning, little empirical evidence exists regarding its implementation in schools. This study evaluates the implementation of the FPLNS from teachers' perspectives and explores the opportunities and challenges associated with delivering inclusive education in the Mauritian secondary school context.

The study is underpinned by a transformative paradigm and adopts a sequential transformative mixed-methods design. The qualitative phase comprises classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, school leaders and other stakeholders, and focus group discussions with learners. The quantitative phase consists of a survey to educators involved in the implementation of the programme.

Preliminary findings reveal broad teacher support for the principles of inclusive education but also identify significant implementation challenges. These include severe learner indiscipline, poor literacy and numeracy skills, absenteeism, limited parental involvement, insufficient professional development, curriculum adaptation difficulties and inconsistencies in implementation across school sectors. Classroom observations further demonstrate that teachers employ differentiated instruction, practical learning activities and relationship-building strategies to enhance learner engagement despite these constraints.

The findings of this study will contribute to current debates on inclusive education reform and provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, school leaders and practitioners seeking to strengthen educational outcomes for vulnerable learners in Mauritius.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills (FPLNS), teacher agency, Mauritius.

From Mauritian Literary Field to Knowledge Production in Postcolonial Marginal Structures: Towards Research Excellence

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Research excellence in the Mauritian literature within postcolonial marginal structures can be treated through a research innovation approach. By approaching Mauritian literary scholarship as a vessel for knowledge build up capacity ensures the adoption of what Arnold (2019) suggests as “a nuanced postcolonial reading method” when the case of Mauritius and its literature is concerned. My work engages with how Mauritian novels are shaped by uneven colonial legacies, multilingualism, creolised and indentured histories with the end outcome of more of a theory production system than only a reflection of culture. My focus is on knowledge production from archival research and oral materials, with a special emphasis on Mauritian Francophone literature that add substance to the diverse literary novels into research material.

This approach is relevant to the Higher Education Symposium theme Research Excellence and Knowledge Production as it frames the postcolonial marginal structures from which Mauritian literature emerges to freely become a field of research knowledge production. By treating knowledge production in Mauritian literature as interpretive of archival and oral materials, I inquire how Mauritian literature can be systematised from the prospect of research collaboration and agenda. This initiative can support the creation of a networked scholarship by moving away from isolated research, aiming at more comparative studies to support co-authored publications.

The goal is to contribute to a Mauritian literature research culture from the critical perspective of local as well as global histories and generate innovations in how knowledge can be produced and shared across boundaries of Mauritius.

Keywords: Mauritian literature, postcolonial marginal structures, knowledge production, innovations

Solidarity-Based Internationalization in Higher Education: A Brazilian Framework for Inclusive and Sustainable Capacity Development

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Lise Tupiassu

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Problem Statement: Contemporary higher education institutions are increasingly expected to internationalize in response to globalization, academic mobility, and international research collaboration. However, dominant models of internationalization often reproduce inequalities by privileging well-resourced institutions, reinforcing linguistic and epistemic hierarchies, and concentrating opportunities within a limited number of global actors. These dynamics raise important questions regarding equity, inclusion, and social responsibility in international higher education.

Methodology/Approach: This presentation introduces the concept of solidarity-based internationalization, developed within the Brazilian context through the CAPES Global initiative and a collaborative capacity-building project involving universities from Brazil and Canada. Drawing on a critical analysis of internationalization policies, Latin American experiences of university cooperation, and the design of a five-year professional development program, the presentation proposes a conceptual and operational framework for more equitable internationalization practices.

Key Idea/Findings: Solidarity-based internationalization offers an alternative paradigm grounded in reciprocity, cognitive justice, social responsibility, and horizontal cooperation. Rather than focusing primarily on institutional competitiveness and global rankings, it promotes South-South collaboration, inclusive mobility, internationalization at home, community engagement, and the recognition of local and regional knowledge systems. The framework seeks to strengthen institutional capacities while reducing regional and social asymmetries in access to international opportunities.

Relevance: This proposal contributes to current discussions on higher education leadership, innovation, and capacity development by presenting an emerging model capable of fostering more inclusive, sustainable, and socially responsible forms of internationalization. It offers practical avenues for institutions seeking to align international engagement with equity and societal impact.

Keywords: Solidarity-Based Internationalization, Higher Education, Capacity Development, South-South Cooperation

**Decolonising Marine Science Education: From Ocean Literacy to National Resilience,
The #Savetheblu Model for Mauritius**

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Savetheblu, Mauritius Institute of Education



Mauritius is an ocean nation, yet ocean literacy remains insufficiently embedded across its education system. This disconnect limits scientific awareness, weakens environmental stewardship, and constrains the development of the skilled workforce required to sustain a resilient Blue Economy. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Mauritius has an opportunity and a responsibility to transform marine education into a national priority, beginning in primary school and extending through higher education and lifelong learning.

This paper presents #Savetheblu as a community-driven platform that bridges education, research, public policy and coastal communities to foster inclusive ocean leadership. Through regional think tanks, interdisciplinary dialogue and sustained stakeholder engagement, the initiative has advocated for the integration of ocean literacy into national education policy. These recommendations were formally articulated in a White Paper submitted to the State House, calling for ocean literacy to become a foundational element of Mauritius' educational and sustainable development agenda. The same vision has been consistently advanced during the Assises de l'Océan patron under the Blue economy ministry, in national consultations on biodiversity and human development within the Vision 2050 process from the Ministry of Financial services and good governance.

Beyond curriculum reform, #Savetheblu argues for the decolonisation of marine science education by recognising that scientific excellence is strengthened not diminished when academic knowledge is combined with the lived experience of fishers, coastal families, tourism professionals and local communities. Universities should become spaces where global science and local knowledge co-create solutions to complex environmental challenges.

The proposed framework establishes a continuum of ocean learning from primary education to higher education through experiential learning, citizen science, digital technologies, interdisciplinary research and community partnerships. Particular attention is given to empowering women and young girls living in coastal communities by expanding access to scientific education, digital skills, leadership opportunities and emerging marine technologies. Their participation is not only a matter of equity, but a catalyst for innovation, productivity and long-term resilience.

By investing in ocean literacy, strengthening university–community partnerships and cultivating the next generation of ocean leaders, Mauritius can position itself as a regional centre of excellence for marine education and sustainable development in the Western Indian Ocean. Ultimately, building an ocean-literate society is not solely an environmental objective; it is a national strategy to raise human potential, strengthen resilience and secure a prosperous future for generations to come.

Ten Questions for Higher Education to Problematize for Peace, Justice, Equity, and Planetary Sustainability

Professor Greg William Misiaszek

Tohoku University; Paulo Freire Institute, UCLA



In this presentation, I critically pose a series of questions vital to (re)guide teaching and research in higher education (HE's) for HE institutions' (HEIs) roles in local-to-global and planetary spheres for peace, justice, equity, and planetary sustainability. The first six key questions (see Misiaszek & Rodrigues, 2023) problematizing to reinvent HE work for Justice-Based Environmental Sustainability (JBES) in education: (1) the (de)legitimized, (de)prioritized framings of “sustainability;” (2) the same question for the terms of “development” and “sustainable development”; (3) the politics of (un)sustainability affecting pedagogies and curricula; (4) education's roles and responsibilities in leading to students' praxis of sustainability; (5) the incorporation, or not, of Southern, Indigenous, and/or Northern epistemologies grounding (un)sustainability taught; and (6) the (non-)anthropocentric groundings in HE learning. We argue that these are crucial in grounding critical comparative work on environmental pedagogies for globally all-inclusive justice and planetary sustainability. The other four questions critically interrogate HE's roles and the needed possibilities for local-to-global peace from academic teaching and research (see Kester & Misiaszek, 2025). These four questions have faculty reflect on how they teach about and research on conflict that leads to violence and peace, exploring the essential role of HE in questioning and disrupting (or not) the essence of conflict and its relationships to violence, sustainability, and peacebuilding.

Keywords: higher education, epistemological diversity, sustainable development, ecopedagogy

Strategic Leadership in Higher Education

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The International Symposium provides an opportunity for Higher Education professionals to gather, discuss and share creative and innovative practices, nationally and globally at this three-day event held in 27,28 and 29 July in Mauritius.

The Symposium proceedings include high Quality keynote Addresses, Panel Interactive Roundtable Sessions to share practices related to strategic leadership in Higher Education: adapting to socio-economic and technological challenges, creative and transformative development, nationally and globally. There are powerful interconnected challenges running through Higher Education such as technology innovation, workforce planning and the development and maintenance of an equitable and productive society.

Worldwide, there is more innovation in Higher Education than often believed (Caldwell, 2016). There is evidence that innovation can lead to improve learning outcomes and higher levels of equity. In Mauritius, the centrally-energised Ministerial decision-making approaches are not best suited to tertiary education moving from “good to great”. There is a need for further research and an expanded search for evidence on the balance of centralised and decentralised approaches to fostering innovation, transformation and a provision for system learning about what succeeds or fails in higher education. The development of policy cannot be understood if we neglect the bureaucracy (Clay and Schaffer, Room for Manoeuvre, 1984).

The Symposium will set high expectations in respect to leadership in change and innovation. However, the capacity of academia and other leaders may be limited to work demands, including threats from actual offensive behaviour of other adults mainly from people from outside the institution.

Although the Symposium will provide some support in local and global networks, externally designed restructuring, restaffing, is not sufficient to achieve transformation. Leadership of the highest quality “for seeing and sensing” (Henry Minsberg, 2003) and the role of Unions have to be deeply embedded in Tertiary Education. “Leadership is of key relevance to policymakers, academics and postgraduate students engaged in research on equity, to student performance in highly disadvantaged settings and to education policy” (Hattie, 2006).

The convergence of so many distinguished professionals will provide an opportunity to interact with them, to share ideas and reflect on the big ideas for transformation and innovation.

Keywords: Transformation, decentralisation, bureaucracy, equity

Emotionally Smart and Digitally Capable: Emotional and Digital Intelligence in Student Leadership in Tanzanian Higher Education

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The increasing digitalization of higher education has transformed student leadership, requiring leaders to combine interpersonal competencies with digital skills. However, limited empirical evidence exists on the influence of emotional intelligence (EQ) and digital intelligence (DQ) on leadership effectiveness among students in Tanzanian higher learning institutions (HLIs). This study examined levels of EQ and DQ and their predictive influence on student leadership effectiveness. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 325 HLI students. Data were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests, Pearson correlations, and multiple regression. Leadership effectiveness had the highest mean score ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.65$), followed by DQ ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.68$) and EQ ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.72$). Significant positive relationships were observed among all variables. EQ was moderately correlated with DQ ($r = .53$, $p < .001$) and strongly correlated with leadership effectiveness ($r = .61$, $p < .001$). DQ was also strongly associated with leadership effectiveness ($r = .58$, $p < .001$). Student leaders scored significantly higher than non-leaders on EQ, DQ, and leadership effectiveness. Regression analysis showed that EQ and DQ jointly explained 46.0% of the variance in leadership effectiveness (Adjusted $R^2 = .456$, $p < .001$). Both EQ ($\beta = .457$) and DQ ($\beta = .377$) were significant predictors, with EQ demonstrating a stronger influence. The findings highlight the complementary roles of emotional and digital intelligence in fostering effective student leadership and underscore the need to integrate both competencies into leadership development programs.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Digital Intelligence, Student Leadership, Leadership Effectiveness, Higher Learning Institutions, Tanzania

Leading with the Brain in Mind: Towards Neuroeducation-Informed Leadership in Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education Settings in Mauritius

Dr Saraswatee Rajiah

Mauritius Institute of Education

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) leadership in Mauritius stands at a critical inflection point. As the nation advances its inclusive education agenda under the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan and the mandate of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA), preschool leaders are increasingly expected to support children with special educational needs (SEN) within mainstream settings. Yet leadership preparation in this domain remains largely intuitive, under-theorised, and disconnected from the neurobiological realities of early development. This conceptual paper argues for the integration of neuroeducation, the interdisciplinary field that applies neuroscientific knowledge to educational practice and leadership as a transformative framework for inclusive ECCE leadership in Mauritius. Drawing on developmental neuroscience, inclusive education theory, and the Mauritius Institute of Education's (MIE) teacher education mandate, the paper proposes the Neuroeducation-Informed Inclusive Leadership (NIIL) Framework: a model comprising four interrelated dimensions, namely, neurological literacy, emotionally attuned leadership, neuro-inclusive pedagogical mentoring, and systemic advocacy. The paper contends that without leaders who understand how the brain develops, how stress and adversity alter neurodevelopmental trajectories, and how early environments shape long-term learning outcomes, inclusive rhetoric cannot become inclusive reality. The implications for higher education leadership, pre-service and in-service teacher training including school leaders, and national ECCE policy in a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) context are discussed. This paper contributes an innovative, evidence-informed architecture for rethinking what it means to lead inclusively in early childhood settings from the brain outward.

Keywords: Neuroeducation, inclusive leadership, early childhood care and education, special educational needs, neurodevelopment

Transforming Science Outreach into Research-Informed Practice: Positioning the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre as a Hub for Innovation, Capacity Building and Evidence-Based STEM Engagement

Partish Chumroo

Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre



Science centres have traditionally played a pivotal role in promoting scientific literacy and inspiring young people towards STEM disciplines through interactive learning experiences and national outreach programmes. This presentation proposes a new strategic direction for the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (RGSC), Mauritius, by positioning its flagship activities as platforms for research, innovation and evidence-informed decision-making. Rather than viewing programmes such as Science Quest, the Model Glider Competition, National Science Week, Déba Clima, and other STEM initiatives solely as educational events, they can be reconceptualised as living laboratories that generate valuable data on learning, creativity, problem-solving, environmental awareness, innovation and career aspirations.

The presentation explores how action research, programme evaluation, design-based research and collaborative research partnerships with universities and educational institutions can be embedded within these initiatives to continuously improve programme quality while contributing to the national and international body of knowledge in science education. Research findings can inform curriculum enrichment, teacher professional development, public engagement strategies and evidence-based policy formulation. Furthermore, the establishment of a research culture within RGSC would strengthen institutional capacity, promote interdisciplinary collaboration and support Mauritius' ambition of becoming a knowledge-driven and innovation-oriented economy.

The presentation argues that integrating research into science outreach transforms science centres from venues of informal learning into dynamic centres of educational innovation, capable of measuring long-term impact, informing national STEM strategies and nurturing future scientists, innovators and responsible citizens. This vision aligns with the broader objectives of higher education leadership, innovation and capacity building by demonstrating how public science institutions can become active contributors to research, policy and sustainable national development.

Keywords: Science Centres, Science Outreach, Educational Innovation, Evidence-Informed Decision-Making

Strengthening Mathematics Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Academics' Insights into Student Attitudes towards Mathematics and achievement in Mauritius

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University of Technology Mauritius



The influence of students' attitudes toward mathematics on engagement, learning experiences, and academic achievement has been widely documented in the higher education literature. This study explores academics' perspectives on students' attitudes toward mathematics, examines the factors shaping these attitudes and provides insights into strategies for enhancing mathematics teaching and learning. A qualitative research design was employed using focus group discussions with academics teaching mathematics and mathematics-related modules across public and private higher education institutions in Mauritius. The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their professional experience in teaching quantitative subjects at the tertiary level.

The focus group protocol was structured around four key themes: perceptions of student attitudes toward mathematics; teaching strategies and learning environments; the relationship between attitudes and academic performance; and strategies for improving mathematics teaching and learning. Ethical considerations were ensured through informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and shared perspectives.

The findings revealed that students' attitudes toward mathematics are shaped by prior educational experiences, mathematics anxiety, self-confidence, programme of study, and social influences. Academics reported that negative attitudes often originate from weak mathematical foundations and examination-oriented learning experiences at secondary level, leading to disengagement and lower performance at university. Positive attitudes, however, were associated with greater participation, persistence, and academic success. Participants highlighted the importance of active learning, real-world applications, collaborative approach through peer support, technology-enhanced teaching, and supportive assessment practices in fostering positive attitude towards mathematics.

The study contributes to ongoing discussions on transformation in higher education by providing evidence-based insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with mathematics teaching and learning in Mauritius. The findings underscore the need for enhanced student support mechanisms, and adaptive pedagogical approaches to promote positive mathematical attitudes and strengthen student success in quantitative disciplines.

Keywords: Attitudes towards Mathematics, Higher Education, Mathematics Teaching and Learning, Student Academic achievement

Innovation, Transformation and Institutional Development: Reimagining Higher Education Leadership for a New India

Professor Sanjay Tiwari and Professor Shailendra Jaiswal

Hemchand Yadav University, Durg Chhattisgarh



Problem Statement: Indian higher education institutions face a deepening paradox: they generate knowledge but struggle to translate it into societal value. Measured primarily by publications, citations, and enrolment numbers, universities remain structurally disconnected from the entrepreneurial, technological, and inclusive imperatives of a rapidly evolving knowledge economy. The challenge lies not in capability but in institutional architecture — the absence of systems that allow innovation to travel from idea to impact, and leadership that can drive transformation without compromising equity or academic integrity.

Methodology/Approach: This paper adopts a reflective practitioner framework, drawing on the author's 38-year journey as an academic leader, researcher, and institution builder. Insights from international fellowships (Fulbright, UKIERI-Cambridge, ICTP-Trieste), multi-institutional governance (Hemchand Yadav Vishwavidyalaya and MP Bhoj Open University), and ground-level reforms at Hemchand Yadav University — including Innovation Cell establishment, six strategic MoUs, NEP 2020-aligned curriculum design, and digital governance initiatives — are integrated with policy analysis of NEP 2020 and international models (Stanford, MIT, BITS Pilani).

Key Idea/Findings: Innovation in higher education must be systemic, not episodic — embedding entrepreneurship, interdisciplinary research, and industry orientation into academic DNA. Transformation demands a governance shift from hierarchical compliance to participatory, outcome-oriented leadership. Institutional development requires sustained investment in faculty capacity, global partnerships, quality assurance, and inclusive access. Critically, these three imperatives are not sequential but synergistic: institutions that align them simultaneously — as demonstrated through Hemchand Yadav University's evolving ecosystem — achieve durable, scalable impact.

Relevance: This paper directly addresses the symposium's core themes of Higher Educational Leadership, Research & Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Education. It offers both a conceptual framework and grounded evidence for how universities can transition from knowledge repositories to engines of social and economic transformation — making it highly relevant for policymakers, academic leaders, and institutional developers navigating the NEP 2020 landscape.

Keywords: Higher Education Leadership, Institutional Innovation, Academic Transformation, NEP 2020

Artificial Intelligence (AI), as a Stimulus for Innovation to Transform Institutional Development: The Case of Mountains of the Moon University

Professor Pius Coxwell Achanga
Mountains of the Moon University



Introduction: Emerging universities, commonly referred to as the Fourth Generation (4G), face many challenges, to innovate, transform and cause effective institutional development. The use of AI, as a stimulus to enable institutions innovate and transform their developmental agenda, is paramount.

This abstract, highlights two AI-driven innovations currently being developed at the Mountains of the Moon, a 4G University; the Smart Parking System, an Internet of Things (IoT) based solution designed to automate parking, and the Agrichain, an award-winning, AI-powered technology solution, designed to mitigate the post-harvest losses.

Problem Statement:

Urban mobility, and agricultural value chains in Uganda, is causing huge economic challenges, including reduced productivity, and increased emissions, while smallholder farmers suffer post-harvest losses. Moreover, traditional solutions, lack contextual intelligence, scalability, and integration with local institutional capacity, for effective transformation.

Methodology/Approach:

Design thinking, and participatory action research, were deployed, with multidisciplinary teams co-creating prototypes for pilot testing various stakeholders, for over 12 months.

Key Idea/Findings:

Integrating human-centered design with production-grade AI platforms, can yield contextually appropriate, scalable innovations. The Smart Parking pilot, indicate reduced average search time by 42% and improved space utilization through dynamic guidance and reservation features. Additionally, AgriChain pilots across partner cooperatives, indicate reduced estimated post-harvest losses by 18%, improved price discovery for farmers, and delivered actionable AI advisories with 74% accuracy for pest risk alerts.

Relevance:

These initiatives demonstrate how universities can catalyze institutional transformation by combining

design thinking, AI engineering (MindSpore), and community engagement, to solve local problems, strengthen entrepreneurship education, and develop micro-credentialled competency pathways for digital agritech and smart-city solutions.

Keywords: AI innovation, IoT, AgriChain, Smart-Parking

Challenges of Digital Sovereignty in Mozambique: Local Innovation and its Framework within the Regulations for Contracting Public Works, Supply of Goods and Provision of Services to the State

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ISUTC (Instituto Superior de Transportes e Comunicações)



This article examines the challenges of digital sovereignty in Mozambique, a crucial concept for the autonomous control of digital infrastructure, data, and technologies, within the context of the accelerated digital transformation driven by the National Digital Transformation Strategy (ENTD) 2025-2030. It identifies barriers such as dependence on foreign technologies, cyber vulnerabilities, and digital exclusion, analyzing the role of local innovation, especially through startups and science, technology, and innovation parks managed by the National Company of Science and Technology Parks (ENPCT, EP). The ENPCT, EP Procurement Regulation (2024) is explored as a mechanism to integrate local innovations into public procurement, promoting transparency, competition and sustainability, with expanded emphasis on the analysis of Article 66 (Direct Award) and comparison with SADC and EU regulations, including examples of judicial cases. A comparative approach with South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, China, and Brazil offers lessons on regulatory frameworks, AI investments, and resilience against external pressures. The methodology was based on document review and qualitative analysis, while recommendations include the need for the Mozambican government to expand the mechanisms of the ENPCT, EP Regulation into national procurement legislation, prioritizing clauses that encourage local startups in digital contracts (e.g., the requirement for localized data in Article 26). Investing in cybersecurity training for public employees, aligned with the National Strategy for Cyber Development (ENTD), could mitigate vulnerabilities, with dedicated budgets for science, technology, and innovation parks to accelerate development. Adopt impact metrics, such as the Digital Sovereignty Index (DSI), to monitor annual progress. Adopting comparative lessons: such as Kenya, implementing data cooperatives for rural inclusion; Nigeria, strengthening laws against cybercrime; and Brazil, using the judiciary to regulate foreign platforms. Furthermore, regional partnerships via the African Union are recommended for common standards of digital sovereignty, and annual audits of the ENPCT, EP to assess the impact on innovation (Article 11). Finally, integrate environmental sustainability into evaluation criteria (Article 33) to promote green technologies, and harmonize Article 66 with SADC/EU for greater rigor in exceptions, such as competition impact reports.

The conclusion highlights the opportunity for Mozambique to lead digital sovereignty in Africa, transforming challenges into inclusive opportunities, contingent upon collective boldness.

Keywords: Digital sovereignty; Local innovation; Procurement regulation; ENPCT; Digital transformation; Mozambique; Sub-Saharan Africa.

Developing and Validating a TQM model to measure academic staff engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education Institutions

Mr Keshav Panray Jungbadoor and Mr Viraiyen Teeroovengadum

University of Mauritius

Developing and Validating a TQM model to measure academic staff engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education Institutions

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are increasingly expected to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through their teaching, research, community engagement, and institutional practices. However, the factors that drive academics' engagement and the successful integration of the SDGs within higher education remain insufficiently understood and require a systematic approach. Drawing on Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, this study investigates the critical factors that enable HEIs to strengthen their contribution to the SDGs and proposes a comprehensive framework for SDG implementation in higher education.

Using a multi-phase mixed-method research design, the study first identified the SDG targets most relevant to HEIs and examined the TQM Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that support their achievement. Analysis of institutional documents, sustainability reports, and university leaders' statements from internationally recognised universities revealed sustainable leadership commitment as an utmost influential factor driving SDG integration. Sustainable leadership was characterised by strategic vision, accountability, stakeholder engagement, systems thinking, and long-term planning, highlighting its central role in embedding sustainability within institutional culture and decision-making.

The study further investigates academic engagement also as a key mechanism through which leadership commitment can be translated into SDG outcomes. A conceptual model is developed to examine how lecturers' psychological needs, autonomous motivation, work engagement, and quality assurance practices influence SDG engagement and SDG-related teaching outcomes. Data is being collected from lecturers across higher education institutions in Mauritius and will be analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to validate the proposed framework and determine the relationships among the constructs.

Keywords: SDG, Higher Education, Sustainability, TQM

**Community Theory, SDG 15, Blockchain, and Cultural Understanding:
A Pathway Beyond 2030**

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Gratia Christian College UNPRME



In the face of SDG beyond 2030, escalating UN sustainable development goals (SDG) with cultural understanding, inequality removal, and ocean protection, transformative approaches to engage community with advanced technology, for example, blockchain and AI for increasing awareness of future education delivery are essential. The Kinarya Cooperative (Kinarya Coop) exemplifies such an innovative, transformative, and integrative effort through its SDG 13 climate change of mangrove with new business model of fundraising SDG#4.7 and 8 with blockchain technology for sponsors' traceability and transparency with international professors and experts in SDG implementation, like Prof. Amelia from Indonesia and Prof. Shirley Yeung from Hong Kong. This initiative underscores the importance of community theory, standards such as BCMS ISO 22301, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in creating sustainable impacts that extend beyond 2030.

Keywords: SDG, Community Theory, AI, Blockchain

Insights into Secondary Educators' Readiness to Embrace Online Continuing Professional Development in Mauritius

Rajiv Nundloll

Open University, Mauritius

Problem Statement:

In Mauritius, secondary school educators face increasing demands to adapt to evolving pedagogical practices amid rapid technological advancements and post-pandemic shifts toward digital learning. Traditional face-to-face Continuing Professional Development (CPD) often proves inflexible, time-constrained, and limited in reach, creating a gap in accessible, ongoing capacity building. This is particularly relevant to themes of capacity development and innovation in higher and secondary education leadership, where online CPD could offer scalable solutions aligned with micro-credentials and AI-enhanced learning tools.

Methodology/Approach:

A small-scale quantitative study employing an online survey questionnaire distributed to secondary school educators across selected Mauritian institutions. The instrument consisted of 12 Likert-scale statements (5-point scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) for measuring such dimensions as: (a) Technological Readiness, (b) Perceived Benefits, (c) Barriers, and (d) Attitudes toward online CPD. To gauge overall readiness levels, data from 100 response sheets were analyzed descriptively.

Key Findings:

The study reveals promising readiness among secondary educators, with approximately 67% expressing positive perceptions and attitudes toward embracing online CPD. Respondents highlighted flexibility, accessibility, and opportunities for personalized learning as key advantages. Common barriers included limited digital infrastructure in some areas and time management challenges, yet the majority demonstrated openness to integrating online platforms, micro-credentials, and AI-supported modules into their professional growth.

Relevance:

This study directly supports the symposium's themes generally, however with a clear focus on that of Capacity Development and Professional Growth. Through demonstrating secondary educators' willingness to adopt online CPD, this research underscores the potential for innovative, technology-driven capacity building which can potentially empower teachers, while inclusively enhancing the quality of teaching practice in secondary schools. Ultimately, it should foster a culture of lifelong learning in Mauritius, with the findings likely to inform policy for scalable online CPD programmes, and bridging gaps in professional development while promoting educational equity.

Keywords: Online CPD, teacher readiness, capacity development, and digital education in Mauritius

Crisis of Care in Educational Leadership: Rigorous Administrative Prowess and Emotional Process Dichotomy

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Educational leadership is undergoing a profound transformation. Leaders today are required to be architects of complex systems while simultaneously serving as guardians of human wellbeing. As the paper notes, “educational leaders today are expected to be two people at once – a rigorous administrator, and a caring, emotionally attuned human being.” These dual expectations operate on fundamentally different logics: one driven by efficiency, compliance, and measurable outputs; the other by presence, patience, empathy, and relational depth. The intensification of both administrative and emotional demands has created what can be defined as the crisis of care in educational leadership.

This crisis is not a reflection of leaders’ inadequacy but of systemic fragmentation. Educational systems reward technical managerial performance, yet communities increasingly require emotionally grounded leadership. Leaders are thus pulled into incompatible postures, resulting in depletion, guilt, and a sense of divided identity. The challenge for the future is not to choose between head and heart, but to integrate them. As the abstract affirms, “Care is not the opposite of rigour. Care is what makes rigour possible.” A cared for community performs better; a cared for teacher teaches better; a cared for leader leads with greater clarity and purpose.

This paper introduces a three pillar integrated leadership model that reframes leadership not as a balancing act but as a unified practice. Each pillar addresses a distinct dimension of the crisis and offers leaders actionable pathways to harmonise administrative rigour with emotional process. The future of educational leadership will belong to those who can hold systems and souls together—building institutions that are both efficient and deeply human.

Keywords: Dichotomy, Crisis of care, Integrated leadership, Harmonise rigour

Humanism or AI-lism: Challenges and Choices of Entrepreneurship Education

Professor Xiaozhou Xu

Zhejiang University



This presentation tries to explore the profound dilemmas and developmental directions of entrepreneurship education in the AI era. Entrepreneurship education has reached a historic crossroads marked by the intense tension between humanism and AI-lism. Rooted in long-standing educational philosophy, humanism advocates holistic human development, critical thinking cultivation and the protection of human rights. In contrast, artificial intelligence has evolved from a mere educational tool into a daily assistant, and may even become a dominant force in entrepreneurship education. Such a conflict is fundamentally reshaping the core purpose and value of global entrepreneurship education. The central concern lies in whether entrepreneurship education can make rational choices between humanistic inheritance and AI-driven transformation, or passively embrace an AI-dominated educational future at the cost of losing its humanistic identity.

It sets three core objectives: to critically explore the discrepancies between humanistic educational ideals and real-world practices, to analyze the rapid integration of AI into entrepreneurship education with a focus on China's practical experiences and international institutional responses, and to formulate a feasible cooperation roadmap to reorient entrepreneurship education's mission in the AI era. It also addresses three key questions concerning the connotation and contemporary validity of humanistic education, AI's disruptive impact on traditional educational concepts amid global digitalization, and effective strategies to balance humanism and AI-lism.

It concludes that entrepreneurship education does not need to choose between the two paradigms. Instead, it should establish a new developmental mission that regards AI as a supportive auxiliary and retains human subjectivity as the core. It will construct a clear role classification framework for humans and AI in entrepreneurship education, and put forward preliminary global entrepreneurship education cooperation plans, offering theoretical references for the balanced and sustainable development of entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, AI, education, humanism

Comparative Study on the Indian Models of Digital Social Entrepreneurship

Professor Dipak Tatpuje

Sanjay Ghodawat University, Kolhapur and VidyaDeep Foundation, Satara (India)



This study provides a comprehensive analysis of Digital Entrepreneurship (DE) and Social Entrepreneurship (SE) in the Indian context, exploring their integration into Digital Social Entrepreneurship (DSE). This study aims to analyse the conceptual evolution of these fields along with a pilot study, investigate their interlinkages for sustainable value creation, and identify the critical role of mentoring in scaling social initiatives. Utilizing a diverse array of methodologies, including systematic literature reviews, qualitative interviews, and quantitative structural equation modelling, the sources examine the transformative power of digital technologies across various sectors, such as handicrafts and agriculture.

Key findings reveal that digitalization acts as a catalyst for societal impact, particularly enabling women entrepreneurs to overcome sociocultural barriers and market access limitations. Furthermore, digital technology capabilities mediate the relationship between SE and sustainable value creation, enhancing both societal impact and competitive advantage.

However, the study highlights the persistent lack of robust theoretical foundations and standard definitions for social enterprises, describing the current research landscape in India as nascent. Significant hurdles to growth persist, including limited access to finance, restrictive regulatory frameworks, and gaps in digital infrastructure in rural areas. The sources emphasize the essential yet underexplored role of mentoring in helping social entrepreneurs navigate these complexities and balance their social missions with commercial viability. A pilot study in Maharashtra further demonstrated that empowering founders through training in ICT and AI tools can remarkably improve operational efficiency through task automation and e-governance.

The study concludes that to unlock the full potential of DSE for sustainable development in India, there is an urgent need for concerted theoretical development, longitudinal research, and tailored policy interventions, such as formally differentiating social enterprises within government programs.

Keywords: AI innovation, IoT, AgriChain, Smart-Parking

Building a Modern National Accreditation System in Uzbekistan: Capacity Development, International Expert Engagement and Quality Assurance Transformation

Dr Fazilat Kodirova

National Quality Assurance Agency Republic of Uzbekistan



Higher education systems worldwide are currently undergoing rapid transformation driven by globalization, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and increasing demands for accountability and international competitiveness. In this context, establishing effective external quality assurance systems and developing professional accreditation expertise have become strategic priorities for many countries. However, emerging national accreditation systems often face challenges related to institutional capacity, reviewer professionalism, and the integration of international quality assurance standards.

This presentation examines the ongoing transformation of the national accreditation system in Uzbekistan and the institutional mechanisms introduced to develop a professional expert corps for state accreditation processes. The study is based on a policy-analysis and practice-oriented approach, drawing upon the recent institutional reforms implemented by the National Quality Assurance Agency for Education under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Particular attention is given to competency-based expert selection, AI-supported interview mechanisms, digitalization of accreditation procedures, expert training and certification systems, and international peer-review practices. The presentation also highlights international cooperation initiatives involving foreign accreditation agencies, global experts, and representatives of internationally ranked universities.

The findings demonstrate that integrating international expertise, evidence-based evaluation mechanisms, and continuous professional development approaches contributes significantly to strengthening transparency, institutional trust, and the overall credibility of external quality assurance systems.

The presentation is highly relevant to the conference themes of higher education leadership, institutional transformation, and capacity development, as it presents Uzbekistan's experience in building a modern, internationally connected, and sustainable quality assurance ecosystem.

Keywords: Quality Assurance; Accreditation; Capacity Development; Higher Education Reform

Professor (Dr) PENG Liping

Director, International Centre for Teacher Education, East China Normal University



China's foreign aid has undergone a long history, tracing back to as early as in 1950's, from aiding neighboring countries of China to those from other continents as well as part of South-South cooperation.

China's aid follows the Five Principles and Peaceful Coexistence, together with the eight principles in the new era and the five-no approaches in its relations with African countries.

East China Normal University has been running a Master's degree program for educational leadership and policy since 2010 and leadership seminars since 2011 as part of China's aid in education sector, thus making contributions to world education development.

Exploring Human-AI Interaction within the Innovative Field of Artificial Intelligence in Education

Mrs Mary-Joyce Marjorie Arekion and Mrs Suddoo Nooraïne Shataaj

Metasuccess



The innovative field of Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED) is experiencing exponential growth due to advances in generative AI and Large Language Models (Feng et al., 2025: pg. 1). From the viewpoint of these authors, there is a need to effectively understand how Human-AI collaboration in learning ecosystems impacts students and teachers. They emphasize that ethnographic fieldwork may enable researchers to gain insight into the experiences of learners and teachers as they evolve in such digital spaces. Hence, Pink and colleagues (2016) explain the importance of using a contemporary data-collection tool to make meaning of human experiences in such a fast-evolving virtual landscape. They demonstrate the efficacy of digital ethnography as a suitable approach for using ethnography as an inquiry tool for these digital ecosystems. Thus, this researcher deems it appropriate to use such a tool to investigate this novel educational landscape, particularly the use of AI tools for e-learning content creation. As a matter of fact, qualitative data provide information-rich insights into the need to emphasize a human-centred approach, as educational innovation should support learners' development. The innovation in this stance is to bring out the importance of developing digital content that addresses learners' needs and not to focus on technology-based digital courseware. This relates to the concern raised by Fanni and colleagues (2023) about human control and management over AI (Artificial Intelligence) systems, which are growing in popularity. As AI and innovation are central themes in this symposium, it seems important to add to the dialogue by reminding the importance of supporting human needs at the heart of the HUMAN-AI interaction.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, e-learning, digital content, human centric

(Gen-)AI and governance: a much-needed alliance

Professor Anthony Antoine

Brussels School of Governance – Vrije Universiteit Brussel



Looking at how integrated Gen-AI has become in students' life, it is almost unthinkable that ChatGPT was only launched in November 2022 – less than 4 years ago. Ever since, its use, accuracy and influence have only increased, and more players like Claude and Gemini have entered the market. Universities and higher education institutions have all responded differently to this (r)evolution, yet they all have in common that practices on ethical use and technical incorporation have become standard in their own governance models. This adaptation has (had to) be(en) very fast as AI-technology is maturing at an unprecedented pace. Parallels with the introduction of the World Wide Web in the '90s can be drawn, albeit that the implementation has gone much quicker. Through a comparison of major universities in the LEAD network, backed with literature in the field, we aim to analyse the different governance models and give examples of what works in practice. Whether in the classroom or in society as a whole, AI and governance are bound to form a much-needed alliance. We also try to identify what innovative programmes are being created to bridge the greatly- looked-for AI-skills in the work environment and the current practices in higher education. Notably, programmes on AI combined with other disciplines are rapidly gaining attention. Finally, we look at whether (Gen-)AI changed the general trends of internationalization in higher education since 2023.

Keywords: (Gen)-AI, Higher Education, Governance, Internationalization

Gamification for Subject-Specific Learning at Primary Level: A Curriculum-Aligned Platform for History and Geography in Mauritius

Dr Sameerchand Pudaruth, Mr Abdallah Peerally, Mr Indranarain Ramlall, Mr Shailendra Ramsaha
& Mr Nagamootoo Pillay Jagambrum

University of Mauritius and MIE



Mauritius's Government Programme 2025-2029 and the Budget for 2025-2026 focus a lot on digital innovation in education. They have made it a top priority by introducing National AI Policy Guidelines for schools, an AI Proficiency Programme for both students and teachers, and using adaptive learning platforms in public schools. At the same time, the Ministry of Education has other plans like Digital Mauritius 2030, the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2030, and the Innovative Pedagogies part of the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform. All these plans want to create digital learning materials that fit well in Mauritius and match the curriculum, especially for primary subjects. This initiative also directly supports the vision of the National Strategy for Higher Education, Science and Research 2025–2035 to harness advanced digital learning platforms and technology-enabled educational experiences that enhance accessibility, engagement, and learning outcomes across Mauritius.

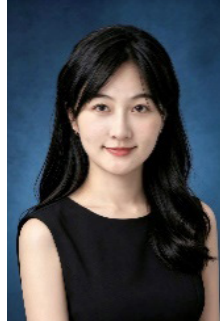
This paper responds directly to this identified educational gap. History and Geography (H&G) is one of the PSAC subjects with no dedicated interactive digital resource, and it consistently records the lowest national average pass rate at Grade 6 with 77.59% across 2017-2025, falling below English (82.85%), French (85.51%), Mathematics (80.16%), and Science (79.48%). The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate's examiner reports identify six long-term competency weaknesses, from map-reading and chronological reasoning to cultural heritage literacy, that rote-based classroom instruction has failed to address. In response, we have developed the History & Geography Learning Platform accessible on <https://www.grade6hg.com>. This is the first dedicated curriculum-aligned digital learning platform developed specifically for PSAC History and Geography in Mauritius. The platform uses ideas from learning theories, PSAC textbooks and past examination papers to help students improve their skills in History and Geography. It has five types of interactive questions such as multiple-choice quizzes, matching pairs, fill-in-the-blank, putting events in order, and true/false questions, where each one is designed to focus on areas where students need the most help according to MES examiner reports.

To keep students motivated, the platform has a three-level progression system that unlocks progressively as a user completes the lower levels. A leaderboard keeps track of the total points scored by a user. This helps to motivate students to come back to get more points and to keep learning. The platform also has an interactive map showing all nine districts, rivers, mountains, plains, craters of Mauritius and Rodrigues. Portal administrators can create, publish, and manage game content, which helps support the goal of empowering teachers as well as keeping the portal updated. The platform offers a scalable approach to strengthening History and Geography competencies while advancing the digital transformation of primary education in Mauritius.

Keywords: Game-based learning, PSAC, History and Geography, Mauritius, Educational equity

A New Model of AI-Human Collaborative Pedagogy in Entrepreneurship Education

Dr Chang Wang
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Artificial intelligence has significantly improved both the efficiency and effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. The most notable evidence comes from our experimental entrepreneurship classroom, where an AI-enhanced teaching model was embedded into the instructional design. Through a pedagogical intervention based on entrepreneurship teaching methods, we demonstrate the successful implementation of an AI+entrepreneurship education model characterized by AI-human collaboration in teaching and learning processes.

The findings suggest that AI tools play a substantial role in improving student learning outcomes. Students generally report positive perceptions of AI-assisted learning in entrepreneurship courses, highlighting its contributions in four key areas: knowledge expansion, cognitive stimulation, efficiency enhancement, and personalized learning support. AI tools help students access broader entrepreneurial knowledge resources, generate innovative ideas through interactive prompting, and optimize learning processes by reducing time costs and improving task execution efficiency. In addition, adaptive learning functions enable more individualized learning pathways, thereby enhancing engagement and learning motivation.

However, the current application of AI in entrepreneurship education remains insufficient. Despite promising outcomes in experimental settings, many institutions have not yet fully integrated AI tools into entrepreneurship curricula. This indicates that the potential of AI-human collaborative teaching in entrepreneurship education is far from fully realized. Future development should focus on deeper pedagogical integration, improved teacher-AI interaction design, and the establishment of more systematic frameworks to fully unlock the transformative potential of AI in entrepreneurship education.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of integrating AI not as a replacement for educators, but as a collaborative partner that reshapes entrepreneurial learning environments and strengthens students' capacity for innovation in uncertain contexts. This provides implications for future educational reform and practice.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, AI, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship pedagogy

Entrepreneurial education and SMES Development

Dr Kheswar Jankee

World Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (WASME)



The importance of reforms and innovations in the educational ecosystem has motivated a lot of research in both advanced and developing economies. With changes in the economic landscape and the need for economic diversification, job creation, and workforce resilience, there has been a lot of recent emphasis on entrepreneurial education in Mauritius. The mismatch in our Labour market has been seen as an obstacle to rapid economic transformation and economic expansion. There is a need to increase the absorptive capacity of the economy in order to adapt to the changes in technological and state-of-the-art modes of production. This paper highlights the importance of entrepreneurial education in developing Mauritius into a regional knowledge-based economy. The gaps in the educational system that hinder adaptation to developmental needs would be analysed. Policy makers and the business sector have highlighted the need for a pedagogical shift with more emphasis on science and technology instead of the traditional management streams. Entrepreneurial education and leadership have become imperative in order to develop new pillars of growth. The young generation should be equipped with relevant entrepreneurial skills to facilitate start-ups and grow the pool of the new entrepreneurial class in Mauritius. This would require breaking away from the traditional curriculum, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels, to factor in entrepreneurial education. This paper would make an attempt to identify the obstacles to entrepreneurial education and seek solutions for its rapid introduction in our educational ecosystem, with emphasis on small and medium enterprises.

Keywords: economic diversification, SMES, startups , workforce resilience

Integrating Disciplines, Empowering Students' Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Professor (Dr) Yuehai Ke

Zhejiang University



Drawing upon a decade of developmental experience at the Zhejiang University-University of Edinburgh Institute (ZJE), this presentation examines how a China-UK cooperative education model can serve as a powerful catalyst for cultivating student innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education. Situated within the broader discourse of the International Symposium on Higher Education Leadership, Innovation & Capacity Development, this presentation argues that disciplinary convergence—rather than siloed specialization—constitutes the essential foundation for nurturing future-ready talent.

ZJE's distinctive ““Biomedical+”” transdisciplinary framework seamlessly integrates life sciences, engineering, data science, and humanities within an all-English immersive environment, providing a compelling institutional case for dismantling traditional academic boundaries. The presentation will elaborate on how ZJE's dual-degree structure, international co-supervision mechanisms, and problem-based learning methodologies collectively empower students to translate fundamental research into entrepreneurial action. Specific focus will be given to ZJE's innovation practice platforms, including undergraduate research initiatives, international innovation competitions, and industry-academia collaboration hubs that bridge laboratory breakthroughs with commercial application. Concrete student startup cases will illustrate how cross-disciplinary training enhances complex problem-solving capabilities, fosters design thinking, and nurtures globally minded entrepreneurs capable of addressing unmet health and technological needs.

Furthermore, the presentation will discuss how ZJE's governance model—blending Chinese and Scottish educational philosophies—offers replicable insights for institutional capacity development across international partner regions, particularly within emerging innovation ecosystems. By sharing measurable curricular reform outcomes, partnership strategies, and policy enablers, this presentation aims to inform higher education leaders on building sustainable ecosystems where disciplinary convergence naturally catalyzes student venture creation, ultimately contributing to global health technology advancement and regional innovation capacity in an AI-driven era.

Keywords: China-UK Cooperative Education, Interdisciplinary Integration, Student Entrepreneurship, International Talent Ecosystem

Generative Artificial Intelligence Empowering Higher Education: The Practice of Zhejiang University

Professor Di Wang and Professor Shanyun He

Zhejiang University



Guided by pedagogical research, we are exploring the transformation of future teaching paradigms. Firstly, we are implementing the ‘STEP Programme for Enhancing Teachers’ AI Literacy’, which draws on teacher training and pedagogical research activities. Focusing on theoretical study (S), practical training (T), innovative exploration (E) and outreach and leadership (P), the programme systematically guides and supports teachers in exploring AI-enabled transformations in education and teaching. Secondly, we will conduct extensive research into relevant policy documents from leading domestic and international universities regarding AI-enabled education, and formulate and publish the ‘Zhejiang University Guidelines for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Education (Trial)’, thereby providing institutional support for the deep integration and innovative development of AI and teaching and learning. Thirdly, we will complete the final assessment and acceptance of the first batch of teaching reform research projects under Zhejiang Province’s ‘14th Five-Year Plan’ for higher education, as well as the recommendation and approval of undergraduate teaching reform projects for 2025, whilst continuing to organise a group of teachers to pioneer and explore pathways for teaching reform. In 2025, six rounds comprising 48 AI practical training sessions were conducted across faculties; two new batches of the ‘AI for Education’ series of empirical teaching research projects were established, bringing the cumulative total to four batches comprising 212 projects, achieving full coverage of undergraduate programmes; and the publication *Zhejiang University Case Studies on AI-Empowered Education* was successfully released; The first national “Qizhen Wenzhi” Artificial Intelligence Model & Agent Competition for university students was launched, attracting 123 teams from 41 universities; the Future Learning Lab was established to facilitate seminars on future learning centred on AI co-creation between staff and students; and teaching research reports were completed, including the “Analysis Report on Student Experience in Zhejiang University’s ‘Strengthening Foundations’ Programme University-Administered Examinations” and the “Survey Analysis and Recommendations on Student Development in the ‘Strengthening Foundations’ Programme”.

Keywords: STEP, AI for Education, AI-empowered education

The Innovator's Journey: A Research-Experimentation-Purpose Framework for Cultivating Entrepreneurial Mindsets in Higher Education

Professor Nikhil Nagarkar

PROJCT Limited



Problem Statement

In a world of accelerating change and distraction, traditional entrepreneurship education often equips students with business tools but leaves them unprepared for the deeper human journey of innovation — navigating uncertainty, connecting disparate ideas, and creating work that matters. Many programs miss the opportunity to cultivate regenerative mindsets and purposeful action.

Methodology/Approach

Drawing from over a decade of real-world experimentation throughout my creative career and the work of other team members at PROJCT, we developed “The Innovator’s Journey” — a modern adaptation of the Hero’s Journey framework tailored for entrepreneurship education. This method follows three core stages: Research (rediscovering the world as it truly is), Experimentation (identifying unconnected nodes and mapping opportunity spaces), and Purpose (activating ideas that generate shared value). It treats innovation not as linear problem-solving but as a narrative arc of reconnection — linking materials, stories, communities, technologies, and human needs in novel ways.

Key Idea/Findings

Through projects such as immersive Art Basel installations that hold collective attention amid distraction, transparent carbon systems that rebuild trust from the ground up, regenerative modular design that reveals new life in everyday objects, and global surveys mapping emergent perspectives, the framework consistently surfaces powerful insights. Participants and partners move from passive observation to active regeneration: attention deepens, cultural taboos become shared rituals, and fragmented systems transform into hopeful, traceable platforms. Key finding: when learners are guided to consciously connect nodes across domains, they develop not just startups, but resilient, culturally attuned entrepreneurial capacities.

Relevance

This approach offers higher education institutions a practical, experiential pedagogy for entrepreneurship that aligns with 21st-century realities — blending creativity, systems thinking, and purpose. It equips students and leaders in Africa, Asia, and beyond to chart their own opportunity spaces and build ventures that serve both economic and human flourishing.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Innovation Framework, Opportunity Space, Regenerative Mindsets

Empowering the Next-Generation of Entrepreneurs by China-Africa Entrepreneurship Education Cooperation

Dr Weihui Mei

Zhejiang University



In the past three decades, the significance of entrepreneurship education has been recognized by both international organizations and national governments. Meanwhile, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence is reshaping the skill set required for the future of work. Developing young people's entrepreneurial skills is particularly relevant for Africa. On the one hand, Africa has the youngest population in the world, with over 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25; on the other hand, more than one out of four young African are neither in employment, education nor training (ILO, 2024). Therefore, entrepreneurship Education has become the key solution for cultivating a new generation of young entrepreneurs in Africa, who can serve as agents of change, role models and a source of inspiration, innovation, as well as socioeconomic progress.

In recent years, the number of African students studying in China has grown rapidly. From 1999 to 2018, the figure increased from 1,384 to 81,562, representing an 80-fold increase with an average annual growth rate of 24 percent. By the end of the 2024–2025 academic year, a total of 380,000 international students from 191 countries and regions were studying and exchanging in China, of whom African students accounts for 16.2%. Benefiting from the entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture in Chinese higher educational institutions, these African students has enhanced their entrepreneurial mindset and intentions. It is also important to establish a Global Alliance for Entrepreneurship Education, as well as to promote the joint training programs and collaborative research in entrepreneurship education, so as to further promote China-Africa cooperation in entrepreneurship education and help cultivate a greater number of entrepreneurial talents for Africa.

Keywords: China-Africa Cooperation, Student mobility, Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurial talents

High-Quality Co-construction of the Belt and Road Initiative: Advancing Cooperation in Entrepreneurship Education

Dr YueYou Xin

Zhejiang University



The external ecosystem of entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions plays a foundational role in shaping its quality, inclusiveness, and long-term impact. This ecosystem consists of interconnected dimensions, including government policy frameworks, technological advancement, economic dynamism, collaborative networks, and socio-cultural environments. Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, this study conducts a systematic evaluation and comparative analysis of the external ecosystems of entrepreneurship education in African countries. It develops a multidimensional analytical framework incorporating political conditions, entrepreneurial performance, technological support systems, economic and market structures, and higher education development indicators. In addition, the study integrates a comparative perspective to identify both common trends and context-specific differences across countries, offering a more nuanced understanding of ecosystem evolution, while also examining how historical trajectories, institutional arrangements, and regional dynamics jointly shape the pathways through which entrepreneurship education systems emerge and transform over time.

The findings reveal diverse development patterns and structural characteristics, reflecting varying levels of institutional maturity and ecosystem integration. Building on these insights, the study argues that effective international cooperation should move beyond uniform models toward differentiated, context-sensitive strategies. It emphasizes aligning educational collaboration with local development needs, strengthening capacity-building mechanisms, and promoting knowledge exchange and innovation transfer. Furthermore, priority should be given to key sectors and strategic pathways that enhance regional relevance and sustainability, while systematically embedding evaluation, feedback, and adaptive governance mechanisms into cooperative frameworks so as to ensure long-term effectiveness, resilience, and scalability across diverse national contexts. By fostering inclusive, adaptive, and resilient cooperation platforms, this approach contributes to the high-quality co-construction of entrepreneurship education systems and supports broader goals of shared development, policy coordination, and global educational transformation.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education; education; ecosystem; African

Capacity Development in Higher Education: Integrating AI, RPL-IDOR, MOOCs, Virtual Labs, and Policy Frameworks for the Gig Era

Professor Yograj Seebaluck

IVT MITD/QAAB



Problem Statement:

Higher education institutions face mounting challenges in adapting to digital disruption, diverse learner pathways, and the demands of the gig economy. Traditional models often fail to integrate flexible recognition systems, scalable digital pedagogy, immersive technologies, and ethical governance frameworks. In Mauritius, capacity development is critical to ensure resilience, inclusivity, and global competitiveness.

Methodology/Approach:

This paper draws on experiential learning and professional practice, including insights from the COL-APU internship on institutional innovation, the Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on MOOCs and instructional design, and the Commonwealth of Learning course on integrating virtual labs in STEM teaching. It also incorporates governance perspectives from the Oxford programme on AI and Digital Transformation in Government, recent policy memo work on Emerging Technologies and Human Rights, and AI for Social Good insights from Polisync. Case studies from RPL-IDOR initiatives, MOOCs, AI-enabled virtual labs, and policy reflections are used to illustrate strategies for institutional strengthening.

Key Idea/Findings:

Capacity development requires a holistic approach that combines leadership, innovation, and governance. RPL-IDOR validates skills acquired outside formal education, while MOOCs expand access to quality learning at scale. Instructional design frameworks ensure pedagogical effectiveness, and AI-powered virtual labs provide immersive, hands-on experiences that enhance employability. Policy reflections emphasize the importance of ethical AI adoption, inclusivity, and safeguarding digital rights. Together, these mechanisms foster institutional resilience, professional growth, and global competitiveness in the gig era.

Relevance:

This paper contributes to the symposium's theme by situating Mauritius within the global dialogue on higher education capacity development. It demonstrates how AI, RPL-IDOR, MOOCs, virtual labs, and policy frameworks can collectively strengthen institutional capacity, promote lifelong learning, and align higher education with workforce needs.

Keywords: Capacity Development, Recognition of Prior Learning (IDOR), MOOCs and Instructional Design, AI Virtual Labs

How University Teachers Utilize Generative Artificial Intelligence to Empower Teaching: Application Scenarios, Differences, and Institutional Implications

Professor He Shanyun

Zhejiang University

Generative artificial intelligence has rapidly entered higher education and is increasingly expected to enhance teaching efficiency, personalize learning, and support pedagogical innovation. However, current discussions have paid insufficient attention to how university teachers formally integrate generative AI into classroom teaching, especially from the perspective of teaching design, disciplinary differences, and institutional capacity development. This study examines 103 university teaching research proposals from Zhejiang University that explicitly integrate generative AI into classroom practice. Using content analysis, descriptive statistics, and cross-tabulation, it identifies major application scenarios and explores how teachers' professional titles, disciplinary backgrounds, team composition, and prior AI-related experience shape their use of generative AI. Interview transcripts from a teacher roundtable were also used to enrich and validate the interpretation of proposal data. The findings reveal five major application scenarios: curriculum content, teaching resources, teaching tools, teaching evaluation, and student learning methods. University teachers most frequently use generative AI to transform students' learning methods, followed by the development of teaching resources, teaching tools, and evaluation practices. In contrast, the use of generative AI for curriculum content development remains relatively limited, partly due to concerns about accuracy, disciplinary authority, and quality assurance. Age does not appear to be a major barrier to AI adoption, but professional title, disciplinary background, interdisciplinary collaboration, and AI-related expertise significantly influence teachers' application focus. The study is closely aligned with the symposium themes of higher education innovation, artificial intelligence, institutional capacity development, and professional growth. By clarifying how teachers actually use generative AI in teaching, this study provides empirical evidence for university leaders, policymakers, and academic developers to design targeted teacher training, build supportive institutional infrastructures, and promote responsible AI-enabled teaching innovation in higher education.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence; Higher Education; Teaching; Teacher Professional Development

Leading Inclusive Education in Mauritius: Building Leadership Capacity for Equitable and Sustainable Learning Systems

Mrs Malini Callimootoo-Jeewon

Mauritius Institute of Education



Inclusive education is a central priority in global education reform, emphasising equitable participation and meaningful learning opportunities for all learners (UNESCO, 2020). However, effective implementation depends significantly on developing leadership capacity and sustaining professional growth across education systems. In Mauritius, although inclusive education policies have advanced, translating them into consistent, sustainable classroom practice remains a challenge, requiring strengthened leadership and targeted capacity-building strategies.

This study examines how educational leadership can advance inclusive education through structured capacity development and professional learning. It argues that inclusion is not merely a policy directive but an ongoing process that depends on the ability of school leaders and teachers to respond to learner diversity, address systemic barriers, and foster equitable learning environments.

Drawing on inclusive pedagogy (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), the paper highlights professional practices that support all learners without lowering expectations or segregating learners based on perceived ability. It also adopts a systems perspective of educational change (Ainscow, 2020), emphasising leadership as a key driver of institutional transformation and barrier removal.

The paper further underscores the pivotal role of higher education institutions in strengthening leadership capacity through pre-service education, continuous professional development, and research-informed practice. Capacity development is framed as a collaborative and continuous process linking policy, leadership, and classroom practice.

By situating Mauritius within broader global debates on inclusive education reform, this paper contributes to understanding how leadership and professional growth can be mobilised to build more equitable and sustainable education systems.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Educational leadership; Capacity development; Professional growth

Continuous Professional Development of University Teachers in Mozambique: Challenges, Institutional Experiences and Perspectives for Quality Enhancement

Professor Xavier Justino Muianga

Center for Academic Development – Faculty of Education, Eduardo Mondlane University



The expansion of Higher Education in Mozambique over the last three decades has been accompanied by growing concerns regarding the quality and relevance of academic programmes offered by Higher Education Institutions. Although national policies and regulatory frameworks emphasize the importance of pedagogical competence and continuous professional development for university teachers, teaching in higher education continues to be largely exercised by professionals whose preparation is primarily disciplinary, with limited exposure to pedagogical and didactic training.

This study examines continuous professional development practices for university teachers in Mozambique, focusing on the experience of Eduardo Mondlane University through its Academic Development Centre and contrasting it with practices observed in other public and private higher education institutions. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines documentary and bibliographical analysis of national legislation, strategic plans, and academic regulations with survey data on teachers' perceptions of pedagogical training and professional development.

The findings indicate that UEM has established a relatively structured model of academic development through initiatives such as the Staff Development Programme and subsequent training programmes that promote student-centred learning, active pedagogies, competence-based education, and the integration of ICT. In contrast, many higher education institutions continue to rely on fragmented and sporadic training initiatives that are weakly linked to institutional quality assurance systems and academic career progression. Significant challenges also persist in translating pedagogical knowledge into classroom practice despite the recognition of continuous professional development as a strategic pillar for enhancing teaching excellence and educational quality in Mozambican higher education.

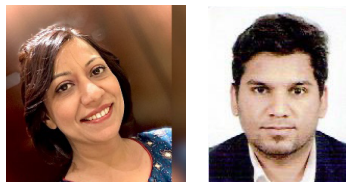
The study concludes that continuous professional development remains unevenly institutionalized across Mozambique. Strengthening teaching quality requires a coherent national framework for university teacher development, broader access to pedagogical training, and the integration of professional development into institutional evaluation and quality assurance systems.

Keywords: Higher Education, Professional Development, Quality Assurance, Mozambique.

Beyond the Workshop: A Sustainable Tri-Pillar Framework for Faculty Development in Health Professions Education in Resource-Constrained Contexts

Dr (Ms) Bibi Sumera Keenoo and Dr Choollun Veer Prabhakar

University of Mauritius



Problem Statement: Despite global consensus that faculty development is foundational to health professions education (HPE) quality, its implementation in small island developing states (SIDS) and low- to middle-income countries (LMICs) remains episodic, under-theorised, and disconnected from national workforce goals. Clinician-educators frequently assume academic roles without formal pedagogical preparation, perpetuating didactic transmission models that are misaligned with competency-based and interprofessional education imperatives. The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) has recently revised its Global Standards for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), marking a significant milestone as the last in its Trilogy of Standards to transition to a principles-based approach, yet operationalising these standards in resource-constrained contexts remains an underexplored challenge. Establishing the effectiveness of faculty development programmes and their measurable impact on student education remains a persistent challenge globally.

Methodology/Approach: Drawing on a narrative review of the faculty development literature, including Steinert's quadrant model, which integrates formal and informal, individual and group learning activities, and informed by the authors' institutional experience at the University of Mauritius Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, this presentation proposes a contextually adapted tri-pillar framework. The three pillars are: (1) formalised pedagogical training through HPE qualifications and micro-credentialled short courses, aligned with HEC Mauritius mandatory requirements; (2) communities of practice enabling informal faculty development through learning outside formal structures, including peer mentorship and reflective scholarly practice; and (3) technology-enhanced and AI-supported delivery for scalable, distributed capacity building.

Key Idea/Findings: Active learning methods underpinned by adult learning theory, alongside recognition and incentive structures for educational contributions, are essential for sustainable faculty engagement. The framework foregrounds professional identity formation among clinician-educators as a neglected but critical dimension, arguing that faculty development must cultivate educator identity, not merely pedagogical skill, to achieve lasting institutional transformation.

Relevance: This framework directly addresses the symposium themes of capacity development, institutional leadership, and AI integration in higher education. WFME's emphasis on lifelong learning and its new CPD Recognition Programme signal a global shift toward standardising and elevating continuing education for health professionals, a shift that Mauritius and the broader African and resource-constrained higher education landscape must strategically engage with to strengthen health workforce quality and institutional research capacity.

Keywords: faculty development; health professions education; capacity building; professional identity formation.

Innovative means for capacity development in Radiology: The case of Mauritius

Dr Marie Chan Sun

Center for Academic Development – Faculty of Education, Eduardo Mondlane University



Radiologist shortages in various parts of the world poses a serious healthcare challenge. Brady et al. (2025) showed that radiologist staffing and training vary considerably across the various European Union member states. Meijden, Nelemans, & Kotte (2016) had revealed a shortage of trained personnel and updated equipment in Africa. There is also a lack of standardization, according to Aderinto (2025), in the use of medical imaging across Africa. Indeed, inadequate resources pose serious concerns about delayed or missed diagnosis and inappropriate treatment, which indeed affect patient outcomes.

On the basis of the scarcity of radiologist in Mauritius and with the aim to ensure future quality of radiological care, the Mauritian Ministry of Health and Wellness approached the University of Mauritius (UoM) for the mounting of a programme for the training of radiologists in Mauritius. There were stakeholders' meetings as well as prospection visits to examine the training resources available in Mauritius.

The Radiology program designed for medical officers of the MoHW demonstrates that context-specific training with three years locally and one year in France, with access to the pedagogical resources of the Collège des Enseignants en Radiologie de France, is critical for capacity development in Radiology in Mauritius. This capacity-building is the basis for ensuring quality and safety in local radiological care. The resultant health strengthening of the health care system in the public sector bridges healthcare gaps while reducing disparities in patient care.

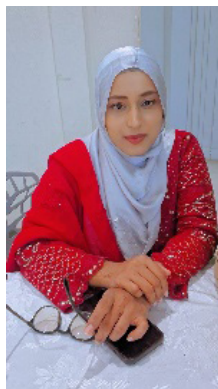
This work is relevant to the International Symposium on Higher Education Leadership, Innovation & Capacity Development as it addresses the urgent need for specialized medical personnel in Africa. The paper demonstrates how integrating digital tools, international collaboration and stakeholders' policy-decision in medical curricula can drive regional excellence in low-resource environments.

Keywords: Innovation, Capacity development, Medical education, Radiology specialization

Building Institutional Capacity in Higher Education: Leadership, Professional Growth and Cross-Border Collaboration in a Rapidly Changing World

Dr Washeelah Youshreen Choomka

U.S.-Africa Trade Commission – Mauritius, Madagascar & Indian Ocean Territories



Higher education institutions are under increasing pressure to respond to rapid technological change, shifting labour-market demands, international competition, funding constraints and growing expectations for innovation and impact. In many institutions, however, capacity development is still approached narrowly as isolated staff training rather than as a strategic institutional process. This presentation addresses the gap by examining how higher education institutions can build sustainable institutional capacity through leadership, professional growth and cross-border collaboration.

The presentation adopts a practice-informed, interdisciplinary approach drawing on experience in law, governance, public policy, institutional advisory work and international collaboration. It proposes that institutional capacity development should be understood through five interconnected pillars: leadership capability, governance and decision-making systems, continuous professional development, partnership-building, and organisational adaptability in response to innovation and digital change.

The key idea advanced is that capacity development is most effective when embedded in institutional culture, strategic planning and leadership practice, rather than treated as a short-term intervention. Institutions that invest in leadership development, strengthen governance processes, create pathways for academic and professional staff growth, and engage in meaningful international partnerships are better positioned to improve resilience, relevance and long-term performance.

This presentation is relevant to the symposium theme of Capacity Development and Professional Growth because it offers a practical framework for higher education leaders, policymakers and institutional stakeholders seeking to strengthen institutional effectiveness in a fast-changing environment. It also speaks directly to the needs of small island and emerging higher education systems, where collaboration, strategic leadership and professional capacity-building are essential to institutional transformation, employability outcomes and sustainable international engagement.

Keywords: Higher Education Leadership, Institutional Capacity Development, Professional Growth, International Collaboration

Teacher Education Development for Climate Change Education: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Dr Anwar Rumjaun and Shakeel Mohammad Cassam Atchia

Mauritius Institute of Education



As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Mauritius faces increasing climate-related risks, including coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, water and food insecurity, and extreme weather events. These risks underscore the need for an education system that prepares our present and future generations to respond effectively to this climate related challenges. Climate crisis is not the sole concern of a few disciplines and learning areas. It needs to blur the knowledge boundaries. Interdisciplinary education offers a transformative pedagogical approach by integrating knowledge, skills, and perspectives from the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, economics, and policy to develop learners' holistic understanding of climate change and its multifaceted impacts. In the Mauritian education context, where curriculum reforms increasingly emphasise holistic development and sustainability, yet teacher preparation for interdisciplinary climate change education remains fragmented. Therefore, teacher education occupies a strategic role in this endeavour as it provides opportunities for developing teachers' capacity to facilitate interdisciplinary learning that connects knowledge of climate science with social, economic, cultural, and ethical dimensions of climate change.

Keywords: Climate Change Education, Teacher Education, Interdisciplinary Education, UNESCO Green Partnership Education.

**Building National Capability Ecosystems:
FSi's Model for Capacity Development and Professional Growth**

Mr Nitin Ramphul

Financial Services Institute



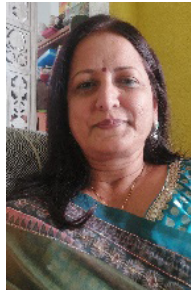
As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Mauritius faces increasing climate-related risks, including coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, water and food insecurity, and extreme weather events. These risks underscore the need for an education system that prepares our present and future generations to respond effectively to this climate related challenges. Climate crisis is not the sole concern of a few disciplines and learning areas. It needs to blur the knowledge boundaries. Interdisciplinary education offers a transformative pedagogical approach by integrating knowledge, skills, and perspectives from the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, economics, and policy to develop learners' holistic understanding of climate change and its multifaceted impacts. In the Mauritian education context, where curriculum reforms increasingly emphasise holistic development and sustainability, yet teacher preparation for interdisciplinary climate change education remains fragmented. Therefore, teacher education occupies a strategic role in this endeavour as it provides opportunities for developing teachers' capacity to facilitate interdisciplinary learning that connects knowledge of climate science with social, economic, cultural, and ethical dimensions of climate change.

Keywords: Capability Frameworks, Artificial Intelligence, Lifelong Learning, Workforce Development, Skills Ecosystems.

The Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills (FPLNS): An Assessment of Early Implementation Successes and Structural Challenges in Mauritius.

Mrs Bissoondoyal Karuna

Ministry of Education and Human Resource



In January 2025, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource launched the Foundation Programme in Literacy, Numeracy and Skills (FPLNS) as a dedicated, remedial pathway for learners aged 12 to 16 (Grades 7, 8, and 9) who did not succeed at the Primary School Assessment Certificate (PSAC). This paper evaluates the structural implementation, early successes, and inherent challenges of the FPLNS during its initial execution phases. Moving away from traditional high-stakes academic testing, the FPLNS introduces a competency-based curriculum that blends functional literacy and numeracy with trade, livelihood, and digital skills, leading to a National Foundation Certificate of Education (NFCE) Level 2 qualification.

Using a mixed-methods approach incorporating educator feedback, student portfolio assessments, and school monitoring data, this study measures the “system success” of retaining vulnerable learners within the school ecosystem and successfully transitioning them toward vocational training through the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD). Preliminary findings highlight major successes, including enhanced student self-esteem, active engagement via gamified and hands-on activities, and the effective deployment of continuous internal portfolio moderation. However, significant challenges persist, notably the systemic risk of educators reverting continuous assessment into formal examinations, a lack of standardized physical evidence for grading, and the logistical demands of managing varied student entry profiles. This paper concludes with strategic recommendations for refining continuous assessment pipelines and reinforcing institutional partnerships to sustain the program’s inclusive mandate. To address the challenges, this paper proposes a multi-pronged strategic framework: (1) intensive educator retraining to dissociate continuous assessment from traditional examination designs; (2) standardising digital and physical portfolio evidence protocols; (3) operationalising robust internal and external moderation cycles to eliminate grading inflation; and (4) leveraging contextual, community-based learning modules to accommodate diverse student entry profiles and ensure certification compliance.

Keywords: FPLNS, Mauritian Education System, PSAC, Competency-Based Assessment, Educational Inclusion, TVET Transition.

**SSKIC-IoBM Inclusive Incubation Center- Center of Hope & Limitless Youth Opportunities
in Pakistan- / Cultivating Hope in Fragile Times**

Mr Raza Abbas

Institute of Business Management – IoBM



Shahjehan Syed Karim Incubation Center-SSKIC an impactful inclusive business incubator that incubates tech-enable ideas located at the Institute of Business Management (IoBM) in Karachi- a leading private higher education institute in Pakistan. Recognition by UNESCO Entrepreneurship Education Network-EE and earned as a Center of Hope from Higher Education Commission Pakistan regulatory body of higher education in Pakistan. Named after the eminent visionary founder of IoBM, Shahjehan Syed Karim, the center serves as a launchpad for early stage startups, focusing on transforming innovative ideas into scalable business ventures and contributing to futuristic livelihoods.

Objectives

- Learn about an inclusive tech incubation center providing job creation opportunities to university students and alumni across Pakistan irrespective of race, gender, religion to ensure the entrepreneurial culture where ideas can come to reality.
- Learn about the incubation center model of governance- nurturing innovative ideas of incubatees by providing a conducive positive environment and productive co-working space.
- Learn about incubation center best practice – providing seed-funding to startups through liaising with the government, industries, private and public sector companies.

Exploring Supervisors' and Post Graduate Students' Supervisory Experiences: A Metaphor Analysis

Dr Narod Fawzia and Dr Anwar Rumjaun

Mauritius Institute of Education



Within postgraduate education, supervision represents the most sustained and personalised learning experience that students encounter. It involves a complex interplay of pedagogical, interpersonal, and institutional elements, where supervisors must simultaneously act as mentors, evaluators, facilitators, and collaborators. Many universities lack formal preparation for supervisors, resulting in inconsistent approaches to mentoring and feedback. In 2025, the Higher Education Commission in Mauritius has issued a set of guidelines for supervision of research. The aim of this guideline is to provide a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and is fundamental to a successful and productive supervisory relationship. It is in this perspective that this presentation is foregrounded which will provide diverse insights related to how supervisors and supervisees understand their roles in the supervisory process.

Keywords: postgraduate, research, supervision, supervisors, supervisees

Bridging Education and Employment: Innovative Career Development and Alumni Engagement Strategies for Enhancing Graduate Employability in African Higher Education

Dr Gloria Ufitinema

University of Global Health Equity

Problem Statement:

Despite increasing access to higher education across Africa, many graduates continue to face challenges transitioning from academic environments into meaningful employment. Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to prepare learners not only with academic knowledge but also with career readiness competencies, leadership skills, professional networks, and lifelong learning opportunities. However, gaps remain in connecting students with industry, mentorship, and alumni networks that facilitate successful career pathways.

Methodology/Approach:

This presentation draws on the implementation of career development and alumni engagement initiatives within the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE). Using a practice-based approach, the program integrates career counseling, mentorship, leadership development, internship facilitation, fellowship placement, employer partnerships, and alumni engagement strategies to support scholars throughout their academic and professional journeys. Program data, stakeholder feedback, and participant outcomes are used to assess effectiveness and inform continuous improvement.

Key Idea/Findings:

The presentation demonstrates how a holistic model that combines career services, mentorship, alumni engagement, and strategic partnerships can strengthen graduate employability and leadership capacity. Early evidence indicates improved scholar preparedness for the workforce, expanded professional networks, increased access to internships and fellowships, and stronger alumni participation in mentoring and career support. The model highlights the value of leveraging alumni as catalysts for capacity development and institutional impact.

Relevance:

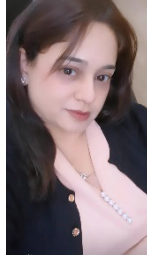
This work contributes to ongoing discussions on higher education innovation and capacity development by showcasing scalable strategies that strengthen the education-to-employment pipeline. It offers practical insights for institutions seeking to improve graduate outcomes, foster leadership development, and build sustainable alumni ecosystems that support lifelong learning and workforce readiness across Africa.

Keywords: Career Development, Alumni Engagement, Graduate Employability, Capacity Development.

Gender, Equity and Innovation Pathways in Higher Education: Insights from Mauritius

Dr Beebeejaun Muslum Zareen Nishaat

Mahatma Gandhi Institute



Higher Education Institutions in the Global South are increasingly called upon to balance tradition with transformation. As Senior Lecturer and Head of Department of Mauritian and Area Studies at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, my academic work has consistently engaged with questions of gender, equity and social transformation in Mauritius. My research spans sociology, social anthropology and public health, with a particular focus on women's experiences in contexts of inequality, health challenges and cultural change.

This presentation situates Mauritius within the broader Global South and explores how gender responsive approaches can enrich higher education and capacity development. Three dimensions frame the discussion:

- (i) Embedding gender analysis into curriculum design and teaching across disciplines.
- (ii) Advancing women's participation in science, technology and innovation through inclusive educational pathways.
- (iii) The potential of interdisciplinary approaches; spanning sociology, public health and social transformation to strengthen institutional resilience
- (iv) Addressing intersections of gender, health and socio-cultural resilience in small island contexts.

Rather than presenting a single study, the aim is to share a scholarly perspective grounded in ongoing research and consultancy projects, including work on gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment and health diplomacy. By drawing on interdisciplinary insights, the contribution highlights how higher education institutions can serve as catalysts for equity and innovation while responding to the realities of limited resources and diverse cultural identities.

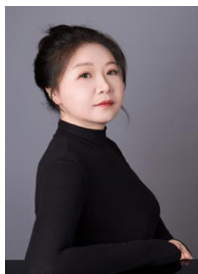
This abstract invites dialogue with international peers on building collaborative networks that foreground gender as a central axis of transformation. Ultimately, it seeks to build bridges between Mauritian and international participants, encouraging partnerships that advance innovation, equity and sustainable capacity development.

Keywords: Higher Education Leadership, Gender Equity, Innovation, Capacity Development

Multi-dimensional empowerment of educational innovation: an AI-Enabled, Internationalised and Field-Based Teaching Reform Model

Professor Mingli MEI

Tongji University



Higher education is increasingly expected to cultivate graduates who can respond to technological change, global collaboration and rapidly evolving labour-market needs. However, in creative communication and media-related undergraduate education, a persistent gap remains between classroom-based knowledge, students' practical competencies and industry expectations. This study examines how a teaching reform model can enhance students' competency development and employability through the integration of artificial intelligence, internationalisation and field-based learning.

Based on an undergraduate education reform project at Tongji University, the study adopts a teaching-research approach combining literature review, comparative case analysis, industry interviews and action research. It draws on international experiences such as Germany's dual education model, Singapore's university-industry collaboration, Finland's interdisciplinary education and project-based learning practices in the United States. At the same time, it incorporates local industry feedback from advertising, public relations, digital media and creative production sectors.

The study proposes a three-dimensional teaching reform framework. First, AI-enabled teaching introduces generative AI tools, data analysis platforms and intelligent learning support systems into course design, helping students develop digital literacy, creative problem-solving ability and personalised learning pathways. Second, internationalised teaching integrates overseas experts, global course resources, international competitions and cross-cultural project collaboration to broaden students' academic vision and intercultural communication competence. Third, field-based teaching connects classroom learning with real industry projects, enterprise mentors, professional competitions and practice bases, enabling students to acquire applied skills in authentic work scenarios.

The study argues that this integrated model can strengthen students' interdisciplinary competence, innovation capacity, teamwork, project management ability and employability. Its relevance to the symposium lies in offering a transferable teaching reform framework for competency development, capacity building and employability enhancement in the age of artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Teaching Reform, Competency Development, Employability, Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence and Micro-Credentials as Strategic Responses to Graduate Employability Challenges: Insights from the University of Mauritius Graduate Tracer Studies 2025–2026

Dr Fareeda Khodabocus

University of Mauritius



The accelerating impact of artificial intelligence (AI), digital transformation, and emerging technologies is reshaping workforce requirements worldwide. Higher education institutions are increasingly challenged to ensure that graduates possess not only disciplinary expertise but also adaptable, future-oriented competencies aligned with rapidly evolving labour-market demands. Despite strong graduate outcomes, evidence from tracer studies suggests that skills adaptation remains a persistent challenge, particularly in relation to digital capabilities, innovation, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning.

This paper draws on findings from the University of Mauritius Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) 2025 and 2026, which examined graduate employability, programme relevance, skills acquisition, industry engagement, and student satisfaction across faculties, centres, and affiliated institutions. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative graduate feedback to identify emerging trends and skills gaps within the Mauritian and global employment landscape.

The findings reveal sustained levels of graduate employability and positive perceptions regarding programme relevance and teaching quality. However, graduates consistently highlighted the need for enhanced exposure to industry-based learning, digital technologies, entrepreneurial competencies, research opportunities, and emerging workplace skills. The study proposes that AI-enabled learning ecosystems and stackable micro-credentials provide a transformative framework for addressing these challenges. By offering flexible, targeted, and industry-responsive learning pathways, micro-credentials can complement traditional degree programmes while supporting continuous professional development and workforce adaptability.

The paper argues that higher education leadership must embrace innovative credentialing models and AI-enhanced learning strategies to strengthen graduate readiness for the future of work. The proposed framework contributes to ongoing discussions on higher education leadership, research and innovation, entrepreneurship education, and capacity development by demonstrating how universities can foster agile, employable, and future-ready graduates while maintaining academic quality and institutional relevance.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Micro-Credentials; Graduate Employability; Higher Education Leadership

Chinese Original Theoretical Model - “Kunpeng Six Forces” Studies 2025–2026

Dr Liu Dihong

Guangdong Higher Education Association



Kunpeng is the image of a giant bird in ancient Chinese mythology, with a back spanning thousands of miles. Structurally, Kunpeng can be divided into six parts: the head, neck, abdomen, wings, tail, and feet. Functionally, the head represents direction and guidance, the neck represents connection and coordination, the abdomen represents substance, the wings represent power, the tail represents thrust, and the feet represent support. Each function corresponds to a specific capability, and the six functions correspond to six capabilities: Leading, Linking, Learning, Launching, Leveraging, and Lifting. The author refers to this theoretical model as the “Kunpeng Six Forces.” Since the first letter of each of the “Six Forces” is “L,” this theory can also be called the “6L Theory.” It is applicable to disciplines such as education and management.

Keywords: Kunpeng Six Force, 6L Theory, theoretical model, capability

Digitalisation of Higher Education: Ethical and Unethical GenAI Use in Academic Work

Professor Rajendra Parsad Gunpath

University of Mauritius



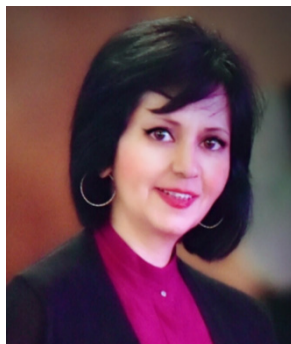
One of the best friends for academics and researchers is GenAI, and one of their worst enemies remains GenAI. Some authors found that conversational AI model can be your friend, philosopher, and guide and even your worst enemy (Chatterjee and Dethlefs, 2003). The significance of this study reflects to what extent the development of Internet and the high flow of information the world of education and knowledge sharing took a serious blow when academic integrity in academic research is concerned notwithstanding that there are potential benefits of ChatGPT in promoting research, teaching and learning, speeding up scientific writing. However, though there is an abundant literature on scholarly research articles on this pertinent issue but many questions remain unanswered: is AI in all its forms (ChatGPT, chatbots) harmful or helpful (Abbas et al., 2024) with plagiarism, unethical use of AI with fraudulent authorship, academic dishonesty, misconduct and integrity couple with suspected unethical behaviour, but would ChatGPT transform learning, teaching and research in this new era of digital technologies? In an attempt to answer these pertinent issues, without knowing who is at fault, this abstract would help in a better understanding of digitilisation in higher education and to track plagiarism and academic misconduct with the ability to recognise plagiarism writing among academics and researchers in the Era of ChatGPT. True that there is the similarity index report but there is also false positive to filter data online to reduce similarity. Until now, how may academic's and researchers who have been accused of alleged use of ChatGPT ? But one thing is sure in the author's own rich experience as an academic: in the absence of any strict warnings and punishments, the lack of moral reasoning, critical thinking and learning would probably have a negative impact, decay research and pulling down both quality and academics in the corridor of the death penalty !

Keywords: Digitalising of Education and Research, ethics and unethical behaviour, academic misconduct

Developing Career-Ready Communication as a Core Capacity in Higher Education

Dr Rita Vyas Nagarkar

Institute of Learning & Development, Hong Kong



“In an increasingly fluid and interconnected global economy, the mandate of higher education extends beyond knowledge transmission to the cultivation of adaptive, future-ready capacities. This session positions communication not as a peripheral competency, but as a foundational capability that underpins employability, professional agency, and sustained career progression. As graduates navigate complex, multidisciplinary, and culturally diverse professional environments, their ability to articulate ideas, negotiate meaning, and engage strategically becomes central to both individual success and institutional relevance.

Drawing on research-informed pedagogical frameworks and sector-responsive learning design, this presentation examines how communication can be systematically embedded within higher

education as a form of capacity development. Rather than treating communication as a discrete or remedial skill set, the session reframes it as an integrative practice—one that shapes how learners construct professional identity, exercise judgment, and participate effectively within evolving workplace ecologies.

Particular attention is given to the alignment between academic learning environments and the communicative demands of contemporary professions. The session explores how thoughtfully designed interventions—grounded in authenticity, contextualisation, and disciplinary relevance—can foster learners’ ability to engage with complexity, collaborate across boundaries, and respond with clarity and confidence in high-stakes professional contexts. This includes consideration of how communication practices intersect with domains such as entrepreneurship, business, healthcare, and emerging interdisciplinary fields.

At a broader level, the presentation contributes to ongoing conversations on capacity development in higher education by foregrounding communication as a strategic enabler of mobility, inclusion, and global workforce readiness. It invites educators, policymakers, and institutional leaders to reconceptualise employability as a dynamic, capacity-building process, one that equips learners not merely to enter the workforce, but to participate meaningfully within it, adapt to its transformations, and shape its future.

Leading Universities in an Age of Polycrisis: Rethinking Higher Education Through Complexity, Institutions, and Futures Thinking

Dr Melita Kovacevic

University of Zagreb, Croatia



Higher education is operating in an era of polycrisis, characterised by geopolitical instability, rapid technological acceleration (particularly artificial intelligence), and shifting societal expectations of knowledge, expertise, and trust. Within this context, universities face increasing pressure to redefine their purpose, organisational logic, and leadership models. This presentation asks: how can higher education leadership remain meaningful when the institutional assumptions of the university itself are under transformation?

The analysis is grounded in a synthesis of complexity leadership theory, which emphasises adaptive, emergent leadership in non-linear systems; institutional theory, which explains the persistence and gradual transformation of organisational logics; and futures thinking, particularly scenario-based approaches to anticipating discontinuity and structural change. Together, these frameworks enable a multi-layered interpretation of current higher education dynamics, where stability and disruption coexist.

Methodologically, the presentation is conceptual and interpretive, drawing on comparative insights from European higher education developments and global policy discourse. It reflects on how universities as institutionalised systems respond to competing pressures: marketisation versus public good missions, global collaboration versus geopolitical fragmentation, and technological disruption versus academic continuity.

The central argument is that higher education leadership is shifting from governance of stable institutions to navigation of complex adaptive systems. In this shift, strategic leadership must become anticipatory, reflexive, and values-driven, rather than primarily managerial or procedural.

By focusing on the European context, the presentation also considers whether Europe's regulatory and value-based model of higher education offers resilience—or introduces constraints—in an era demanding rapid adaptation. This contribution aims to stimulate critical discussion on the future of universities and the evolving nature of leadership required to sustain their relevance in uncertain times.

Keywords: Polycrisis, Complexity, Futures thinking, Institutional change, Leadership

Joining the Moving Train: Operationalising Mauritius's Micro-Credentials Blueprint and AI in Higher Education Guidelines through Employer-Validated Virtual Work Experience

Professor Dean Rowan and Professor Sarah-Jane Mintey

Consilium House Management Consulting/ CEO Developing Experts UK



Mauritius has, in a short period, built one of the most coherent tertiary policy architectures in the Commonwealth: NSPHESRI 2025–2035, the HEC Blueprint for Micro-Credentials, the HEC/COL Guidelines on the Use of AI in Higher Education, the amended Higher Education Act, and the Quality Code for Higher Education. The policy is in place. What remains is operationalisation.

This paper presents a joint capability proposition from Consilium House Management Consulting W.L.L. and Developing Experts Limited, designed to operationalise the existing architecture rather than parallel it — to join the moving train, not to lay new track. Developing Experts contributes the operational AI-enabled learning and assessment infrastructure: five-day immersive Virtual Work Experience programmes co-designed with employers, criterion-referenced assessment, AI-assisted marking, and an anonymised workforce-intelligence layer for skills planning, equity monitoring and employer-aligned pathway design. Consilium House contributes the strategic, governance and ministerial advisory frame. The host Higher Education Institution and the Higher Education Commission retain governance, quality assurance and regulatory authority.

The proposition docks into all five Guidelines of the Blueprint — via the sub-unit-within-an-HEI-accredited award route — and into Pillars II, III and IV of the AI Guidelines, with Pillar I (Governance) retained by the host HEI and HEC. The first step is a phased, evidence-led pilot: Open University of Mauritius as institutional anchor, HEC as co-pilot, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority engaged from inception for NQF and NCVTS mapping, Polytechnics Mauritius engaged for subsequent TVET–HE articulation; ICT and fintech as recommended first sector. Letter of Intent in months 0–6; pilot delivery and first workforce-intelligence dataset in months 6–12; independent evaluation and evidence-led expansion decision in months 12–24.

Mauritius would create the first higher education evidence base for this architecture — a regional reference point Mauritius co-owns from inception, rather than importing a model already proven elsewhere.

Keywords: Micro-credentials, Virtual Work Experience, HEC Blueprint for Micro-Credentials, NSPHESRI 2025–2035

Between Opportunity and Uncertainty: Student Experiences with Generative AI in Tanzanian Higher Education

Dr Yujie Xue and Dr Chang Zhu

Vrije Universiteit Brussel ECHE



Problem Statement:

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is rapidly transforming higher education, yet empirical evidence from African contexts remains limited. While students are increasingly using AI tools for learning, many universities are still developing clear guidance, training, and governance mechanisms for responsible AI use. This study addresses this gap by examining how students in Tanzanian higher education use GenAI, how they perceive its benefits and risks, and how they view institutional guidance, AI literacy, and equity.

Methodology/Approach:

The study draws on a survey of 1,111 students in Tanzanian higher education, mainly from Mzumbe University and Sokoine University of Agriculture. Descriptive statistics were used to examine AI usage patterns, perceived learning benefits and risks, institutional guidance, AI literacy, and inclusion-related perceptions. Exploratory group comparisons and a simple regression model were also conducted. In addition, two open-ended questions were analysed through keyword-assisted descriptive coding to provide supplementary insights into students' experiences.

Key Idea/Findings:

The findings show that GenAI has already become part of everyday study practice for many students. A total of 87.5% reported using AI at least occasionally, with ChatGPT being the dominant tool. Translation and language support, summarising materials, brainstorming ideas, and reading comprehension were among the most common uses. Students recognised AI's value for understanding course content and improving learning efficiency, but also expressed concerns about academic integrity, overdependence, reduced critical thinking, and inaccurate information. Importantly, only 38.4% perceived university AI rules as clear, while 57.5% wanted more institutional training on ethical and effective AI use. Regression results further showed that students with stronger self-reported AI literacy were more likely to desire additional AI training.

Relevance:

This study contributes to the symposium theme of Artificial Intelligence and Capacity Development by highlighting the need for clearer institutional AI guidance, responsible AI literacy training, and equity-sensitive support in African higher education.

Keywords: Generative AI; Higher Education; AI Literacy; Institutional Guidance

Bridging the Data Divide in Education: A Low-Code, AI-Driven Platform for Data-Informed Decision-Making in the Mauritian Education System

Dr Shobhanund Jharee

Ministry of Education and Human Resource

Problem Statement: Education systems globally are increasingly data-rich yet decision-poor. In Mauritius, despite strong educational indicators — including a 94.3% literacy rate and near-universal primary enrolment — the absence of a centralized, real-time data infrastructure constrains evidence-based governance and institutional responsiveness (Pedró et al., 2025; World Bank, 2023). Data fragmentation across institutional silos, inconsistent reporting standards, and limited analytical capacity create a structural “data divide” that significantly undermines policy effectiveness and leadership decision-making at all levels.

Methodology/Approach: This study adopts a Design Science Research (DSR) methodology, encompassing problem identification, system architecture design, prototype development, and experimental evaluation. A low-code, AI-enabled platform was developed using Microsoft Power Platform — integrating Power Apps, Dataverse, Power Automate, and Power BI — and evaluated through a controlled simulation.

Key Idea/Findings: The proposed platform centralizes educational data within a role-based access control framework, automates administrative workflows, and delivers AI-driven analytics to support multi-level decision-making. Experimental results demonstrate a 50% reduction in reporting time, full enforcement of data access protocols, and measurably faster identification of student performance trends. These outcomes are consistent with emerging evidence that low-code platforms substantially accelerate digital transformation in resource-constrained environments (Shi, Dong & Gan, 2025; Mahamad et al., 2025).

Relevance: This research directly engages the symposium’s themes of Artificial Intelligence and Higher Educational Leadership, Research and Innovation by demonstrating how AI and low-code technologies can operationalize data-driven governance in small island developing states. It offers a scalable, replicable model for policymakers and educational leaders seeking to bridge the data divide without prohibitive investment in bespoke infrastructure.

Keywords: Data-Driven Decision-Making, Low-Code Platforms, Artificial Intelligence in Education, Digital Transformation

Leading from the Inside Out: Responsible Digital Academic Leadership, Human Flourishing, and the Vitality Imperative

Professor Marieta du Plessis

Stellenbosch Business School, Stellenbosch University



Problem Statement: Academic leaders face a deepening paradox: they are simultaneously required to champion institutional AI adoption and digital transformation and to protect the human conditions under which knowledge is produced, relationships are sustained, and academic identity remains coherent. Most existing frameworks address this as a competency or literacy challenge. This presentation argues that framing is insufficient — what is at stake is fundamentally a question of leadership vitality: whether academic leaders possess the inner stability and reflective capacity to lead responsibly under accelerating technological pressure. In Global South contexts, where digital inequality compounds this pressure, the stakes are considerably higher.

Methodology/Approach: This presentation draws on a conceptual-integrative approach, synthesising responsible leadership theory, the Leadership Vitality Spectrum (LVS) Model (Du Plessis, 2026), and emerging scholarship on digital academic leadership, informed by the author's facilitation of an international Digital Academic Leadership Webinar Series (ECHE LEAD Academic Network, 2026). The framework presented forms the theoretical foundation of a developing bilateral comparative research programme on responsible leadership and AI in higher education, in partnership with Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Key Idea/Findings: Three propositions are advanced. First, responsible digital academic leadership is a vitality question — requiring inner resources that institutional digital transformation agendas actively deplete. Second, institutions bear complicity in creating conditions that make irresponsible digital leadership more likely, through performance metrics and AI adoption imperatives that crowd out reflective space. Third, in African higher education contexts, responsible digital academic leadership must reckon explicitly with structural inequalities that render universal digital transformation narratives incomplete.

Relevance: Academic leaders need frameworks integrating ethical agency, relational intelligence, and inner leadership capacity — not merely digital fluency. This presentation offers reflections on such a framework, grounded in an active international research agenda and relevant to leadership development, institutional strategy, and what it means to lead responsibly in a digitally transformed academy.

Keywords: responsible leadership, digital academic leadership, leadership vitality, Global South higher education

Rethinking Teacher Professional Development through Micro credentials: A Subject Didactics Model for Experienced Teachers

Dr Khemduth Singh Angateeah

Mauritius Institute of Education



Teacher professional development is increasingly recognised as a lifelong process that should respond to the evolving needs of educators throughout their careers. However, many existing professional development pathways remain qualification-oriented, requiring practising teachers to enrol in comprehensive programmes that may not align with their professional realities. While qualifications such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) remain essential, many experienced teachers are unlikely to pursue another formal qualification despite recognising the need to strengthen their subject-specific pedagogical expertise.

This presentation introduces the Subject Didactics Microcredential Model (SDMM), an institutional innovation that reimagines continuing teacher professional development through targeted, competency-based learning pathways. Rather than developing new professional development programmes, the model repurposes two existing subject didactics modules within the PGCE as standalone microcredentials. These modules focus on strengthening teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) by enhancing subject-specific teaching approaches, instructional strategies, assessment practices and classroom decision-making. The model is designed to complement, rather than replace, existing teacher education qualifications by creating an intermediate professional learning pathway for experienced teachers seeking targeted pedagogical enhancement.

The presentation demonstrates how existing subject didactics modules can be repurposed into flexible microcredentials without compromising the integrity of the full qualification. The proposed model broadens access to high-quality professional learning while making effective use of existing institutional expertise and programme resources. It also illustrates how such microcredentials may subsequently become stackable towards larger professional qualifications, creating flexible lifelong learning pathways.

This presentation seeks to stimulate discussion on how higher education institutions can redesign existing programmes to provide more accessible and responsive professional learning opportunities. Feedback and recommendations from symposium participants and stakeholders will contribute to refining the proposed model and informing its future implementation and evaluation.

Keywords: Microcredentials, Teacher Professional Development, Subject Didactics, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Lifelong Learning, Higher Education.

AI in STEM Education: Ethical Challenges, Digital Divides, and the Imperative for Human-Centred Pedagogy

Dr Shakeel Mohammad Cassam Atchia

Mauritius Institute of Education



Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in education, particularly within the STEM disciplines, presenting a dual-edged trajectory of significant opportunity and considerable challenge. As Bharadiya (2023) contends, the expansive potential of AI is accompanied by a complex array of pedagogical, ethical, and socio-technical concerns that warrant critical examination. This study undertakes a desktop analysis, employing thematic content analysis of recent peer-reviewed journal articles, to investigate the contemporary integration of AI in STEM education across diverse global contexts. The inquiry is theoretically anchored within the intersecting lenses of educational research, curriculum frameworks, and competencies development, thereby affording a multidimensional perspective on current practices and emergent trends.

The analysis reveals a growing institutional and instructional reliance on AI-driven tools within STEM learning environments. However, this increasing dependency surfaces several pressing challenges. Prominent among these are the unethical deployment of AI systems, encompassing dilemmas related to algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the erosion of academic integrity. Further concerns pertain to the misapplication of AI in high-stakes grading, assessment, and student profiling, which risks perpetuating inequities and undermining valid evaluative practices. The findings also underscore the intrinsic link between AI utilisation and digital inequalities, wherein disparities in access to infrastructure and digital literacy exacerbate existing educational divides. Moreover, the reduction of meaningful human interaction within AI-mediated pedagogies poses a threat to the socio-emotional dimensions of learning, while the potential attenuation of critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills remains a salient risk, as corroborated by Adeshola and Adepoju (2023) and Bharadiya (2023).

Synthesising these insights, the study proposes a conceptual framework designed to guide the ethical, equitable, and pedagogically sound integration of AI in STEM education. This framework seeks to balance technological innovation with human-centric educational values, offering a structured approach for educators, policymakers, and researchers to navigate the complexities of AI adoption while safeguarding the foundational objectives of STEM learning.

Keywords: AI Ethics, Educational Technology, Digital Divide and Human-Centred Learning

Incorporating Artificial Intelligence Technologies in Engineering Projects at Undergraduate Level

Dr Raviduth Ramful

University of Mauritius



The advent of ground-breaking technologies in the Industry 4.0 era such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Additive Manufacturing are re-shaping the teaching curriculum in engineering. The implementation of AI, driven by customized algorithms, such as supervised, unsupervised and deep learning, are enabling the rapid processing and analysis of large datasets thereby providing automated solutions and reliable predictive outcomes. This study aims to provide an overview of commonly used AI models in engineering final year projects at undergraduate level. The main AI models covered, namely the Deep Neural Network (DNN) and YOLO models are considered in engineering projects by students to predict essential engineering metrics and automate processes through pattern recognition techniques. The DNN model is useful for predictive analytics as they are designed to accurately and swiftly recognize complex and non-linear patterns from large datasets. Consequently, DNN models can be implemented to map large and complex datasets in engineering to generate useful output pertaining to material defects, performance and durability. On the other hand, the YOLO object-detection algorithm is one of the commonly used AI models for computer vision and is adapted to process large sets of images for real-time detection. Besides powerful GPUs, the success of image processing through YOLO algorithm rests on the size of the datasets and precise annotations. Properly trained YOLO models are useful to recognize patterns in production lines for sorting mechanisms and defect detection among others. Open access platforms such as Google Colab can be used by students to run AI models based on its cloud-based GPU and pre-installed libraries. Given its ability for swift AI model training, both the YOLO and DNN models can be simulated, trained and evaluated via the Google Collab platform. The integration of AI models in modern engineering curriculum is preparing the next-generation engineers for the Industry 4.0 era.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), YOLO, Deep Neural Network (DNN), Google Colab

Your Career Will Be Shaped by AI. The Question is Whether You Shape It First

Professor Ludovic Thanay

Webb Fontaine



Problem Statement: We stand at the most profound inflection point in the history of work. Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant promise but it is actively reshaping industries, redefining roles, and reimagining what human potential looks like in the workplace. Entry-level coding and analytical positions, long considered the dependable first rung on the technology career ladder, are being transformed by AI-native platforms at a pace that outstrips the current response of educational institutions. The risk is not that AI will replace human ambition, it is that we will prepare the next generation for a world that no longer exists.

Methodology/Approach: This presentation draws on direct professional experience building and implementing AI-native platforms for Customs administrations and ports across multiple continents, combined with earlier work at the World Customs Organization supporting capacity development across member states. It uses real deployment cases to show how AI is changing operational workflows, team structures, and the skills that organisations are actively recruiting for today.

Key Idea/Findings: AI has moved through three distinct stages. First, rule-based systems that automated repetitive tasks. Then generative AI, which changed how professionals write, analyse, and communicate. Now, agentic AI: systems that can plan, reason, and execute complex tasks across multiple steps with little human direction. Each stage has raised the bar for what humans need to bring to work. The students graduating today will spend their careers working alongside AI agents. The institutions that give them the judgment, critical thinking, and adaptability to do that well will define the next generation of professional leadership.

Relevance: This presentation connects directly to the symposium's focus on AI and capacity development. It is aimed at educators, leaders, and students who want a clear-eyed, practical understanding of where AI is heading and what it means for careers, curricula, and human potential.

Keywords: Agentic AI, AI-native solutions, workforce transformation, capacity development

CAIR: A Framework for Responsible Leadership in Artificial Intelligence Integration in Higher Education

Dr Zhao Cheng and Dr Chang Zhu

Vrije Universiteit Brussel



Problem Statement: The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education (HE) has created both opportunities and challenges for teaching, learning, and academic work. However, limited understanding of how academics perceive the barriers to AI integration and what practices they consider necessary for responsible and ethical implementation. Existing discussions often focus on technical capabilities or regulatory concerns in isolation, overlooking the interconnected institutional, individual, and practical factors that shape AI adoption in HE.

Methodology/Approach: This study employed a qualitative exploratory design involving an international webinar with academics and master's students from diverse countries. Data were collected through facilitated discussions and analysed using thematic analysis in MAXQDA. The analysis was guided by an iterative process that combined deductive coding with inductive identification of emerging themes. Findings were synthesised into the CAIR framework, comprising four dimensions: Capacity, Attitudes, Institutional Support, and Real-world Use.

Key Findings: The findings reveal that barriers to AI integration extend beyond technical limitations and include ethical concerns, misuse and overreliance on AI, insufficient training, uneven access to AI resources, institutional inertia, and the absence of clear governance structures. Participants also identified responsible practices that support sustainable AI adoption, including professional development, AI literacy initiatives, ethical awareness, policy development, governance mechanisms, collaboration, and strategic integration of AI into educational practices. These findings informed the development of the CAIR framework, which offers systemic perspectives on AI integration by linking individual competencies and attitudes with institutional structures and real-world implementation practices.

Relevance: This study contributes a theoretically informed and empirically grounded framework for understanding responsible AI integration in HE. By highlighting the interplay between capacity building, institutional support, attitudes, and practical implementation, the CAIR framework provides guidance for educators, educational leaders, and policymakers seeking to foster ethical, equitable, and sustainable AI adoption and responsible leadership in HE.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Higher Education, AI Integration, Responsible Leadership

Advancing STEM Education through Maker-Based Learning, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and Aerospace-Inspired Innovation in Mauritius

Mr Ramsurrun Navneet Sharma

Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre



This contribution highlights professional practice in STEM education through experiential learning (I do, I understand, I improve), maker-based innovation (building new things), robotics, artificial intelligence, and aerospace-inspired activities in Mauritius. At the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (RGSC), I design and facilitate hands-on STEM programmes that promote engineering thinking, creativity, and problem-solving among learners of diverse educational levels.

An important component of my work involves the American Maker Space, situated at Bell Village, RGSC, where participants engage in design thinking, electronics, model prototyping and robotics. These encourage participants to develop systems through iterative experimentation, while gaining skills in robotics, embedded systems, and computational thinking. Robotics-based learning programmes/workshops further strengthen engagement by introducing real-world applications of sensors, control systems, and intelligent behaviour in machines.

In addition, my work also involves in the delivery of science shows, STEM talks and science career guidance sessions in schools and communities around Mauritius. These aim to stimulate interest in STEM while providing participants with exposure to new career pathways and also encourage students to explore STEM in an accessible and inspiring manner.

In parallel, I contribute to the Model Glider Competition, where learners explore fundamental principles of aerodynamics, including lift, drag, stability, and flight optimisation. These activities provide an access route to aerospace engineering concepts and encourage analytical thinking through iterative design and performance evaluation, which are inspired by real-world aerospace practices.

In addition to these efforts is my ongoing engagement with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, which supports the integration of intelligent systems into educational contexts. This includes exploring how AI can enhance learning experiences, automation, and data-driven decision-making in STEM education environments.

These initiatives are also made more meaningful by linking them to global inspiration drawn from NASA and engineering challenges, helping learners connect daily classroom learning to real-world engineering and scientific exploration.

Keywords: STEM education, robotics, artificial intelligence, aerodynamics.

Mapping Micro-Credentials for Continuing Professional Development of Higher Education and TVET Teaching Personnel: Lessons from Sri Lanka

Dr Jayalath Arachchige Don Janaka Jayalath

University of Vocational Technology



Higher Education (HE) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems across South Asia face a critical gap: teaching personnel lack the digital competencies needed to deliver future-ready education, yet existing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) frameworks are rigid, under-resourced, and poorly aligned with evolving labour market demands. In Sri Lanka, this challenge is compounded by limited digital infrastructure, low institutional awareness of micro-credentials, and an absence of standardized national frameworks to recognise and stack targeted qualifications.

This institutional case study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a structured questionnaire survey of HE and TVET educators and administrators with an in-depth review of national policy documents, regulatory frameworks, and institutional practices. Data were gathered across multiple institutions to assess digital skill readiness, current CPD mechanisms, and attitudes towards micro-credential adoption. Findings were cross-referenced with international best practices and UNESCO guidelines on micro-credential standardization.

The study finds that micro-credentials offer a viable, scalable pathway to upskill HE/TVET teachers in targeted digital competencies including online pedagogy, learning management systems, and data literacy, when embedded within a structured national framework. Sri Lanka's existing Flexible Learning Mode (FLM) and National Skills Passport demonstrate promising foundations. However, systemic barriers including weak quality assurance mechanisms, a digital divide between urban and rural institutions, and limited industry–academia collaboration — must be urgently addressed.

This research advances the Higher Educational Leadership, Entrepreneurship Education and Capacity Development, and Artificial Intelligence and Micro-Credentials. It presents Sri Lanka's experience as a replicable model for developing nations seeking to modernize their teaching workforces through flexible, technology-enabled credentialing ecosystems offering actionable policy insights for institutional leaders, policymakers, and education innovators across the region.

Keywords: Micro-credentials, CPD, Higher Education, TVET

Embedding Micro-Credentials in Engineering Programmes: A Framework for Enhancing Graduate Employability and Lifelong Learning

Dr Hurreeram Dinesh Kumar

University of Mauritius



Mauritius has recently established the legal and regulatory framework to support the development, approval and recognition of micro-credentials within its higher education sector (HEC, 2026). The setting up of the national framework is very timely as there is a growing need for developing competences in response to rapid changes in the external environment characterised by digital transformation, sustainability imperatives and Industry 5.0, among others. This paper proposes a framework for embedding micro-credentials within undergraduate programmes without increasing programme duration or compromising academic rigour. Engineering programmes will be considered as a case study for the purpose of illustration.

Rather than functioning as standalone qualifications, the proposed model integrates stackable, competency-based micro-credentials into existing modules, enabling students to earn digital badges and industry-recognised certifications alongside their academic degree. The framework encompasses three complementary domains: digital engineering skills, sustainable engineering practices, and professional and transferable skills. Competencies are assessed through authentic, project-based activities and mapped directly to programme learning outcomes and graduate attributes. The proposed approach also promotes stronger collaboration between universities, industry, and professional bodies by aligning curriculum content with current workforce requirements.

The paper discusses the potential implementation of this framework within engineering programmes in small island developing states, where universities face the dual challenge of responding to rapidly changing labour market demands while supporting national economic development. It argues that embedding micro-credentials within engineering curricula offers a practical mechanism for enhancing curriculum responsiveness, strengthening university–industry engagement, and preparing graduates for increasingly dynamic and interdisciplinary careers.

The framework contributes to ongoing discussions on the future of higher education by positioning academic programmes as adaptable ecosystems that foster both academic excellence and continuous skills development.

Keywords: micro-credentials, engineering, academic programmes

Participants not presenting:

Transnational Education and Cultural Integration in a Global Era

Professor Di Chen

Zhejiang University



“In an increasingly interconnected world, transnational education (TNE) serves as a vital bridge for cross-cultural academic collaboration and talent cultivation. Drawing on the experience of the Zhejiang University-University of Edinburgh Institute (ZJE), we demonstrate how TNE facilitates cultural integration while highlighting tangible student cultivation outcomes. As a flagship China-UK joint venture, ZJE integrates the rigorous academic traditions of both institutions, offering dual-degree programs delivered entirely in English within an immersive, research-driven curriculum.

Through this innovative model, ZJE has significantly enhanced students’ cross-cultural communication skills, academic resilience, and global competitiveness. Students not only master disciplinary knowledge in biomedical sciences but also develop the intellectual flexibility to navigate different pedagogical systems, assessment methods, and research cultures. Structured opportunities such as joint laboratory rotations, international summer schools, and cross-campus exchanges between Zhejiang and Edinburgh enable students to build authentic transnational networks and gain first-hand experience of diverse scientific and educational practices.

The cultivation outcomes are noteworthy: ZJE graduates demonstrate strong adaptability in multilingual and interdisciplinary settings, with many successfully pursuing postgraduate studies at world-leading universities—including Oxford, Cambridge, and Ivy League institutions—or securing positions in multinational corporations and international research organizations. Furthermore, students report increased confidence in negotiating cultural differences, resolving cross-cultural conflicts, and collaborating effectively in global teams. The ZJE case reveals that well-structured TNE programs, when intentionally designed with student development at the core, not only impart knowledge but also cultivate globally competent talents who can seamlessly integrate diverse cultural and intellectual traditions while contributing meaningfully to an interconnected world.

Keywords: Transnational Education (TNE), Cultural Integration, Student Cultivation Outcomes, China-UK Joint Institute

From Classroom Practice to National Impact: Entrepreneurship Education as a Capacity Development Model at KDU

Dr Kalpana Rasangika Ambepitiya

General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University

Problem Statement: Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to develop graduates who can think entrepreneurially, innovate responsibly, and contribute to national development. However, entrepreneurship education often remains limited to classroom-based theory or isolated assignments, creating a gap between academic learning and real-world entrepreneurial capacity development.

Methodology/Approach: This presentation adopts a best practice case study approach based on the evolution of entrepreneurship education at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU), Sri Lanka. It reflects on the transformation of a classroom assignment initiated in 2014 into the KDU Young Entrepreneurs initiative and later into Startup Today - Innovation Challenge and Demo Exhibition, a structured platform integrating ideation, pitching, mentoring, prototype development, exhibition, industry engagement, and recognition.

Key Idea/Findings: The case demonstrates that entrepreneurship education is more impactful when designed as a continuous, experiential process rather than a single-module requirement. With institutional leadership, student empowerment, mentoring, and external collaboration, students turned ideas into feasible entrepreneurial concepts and developed creativity, communication, leadership, market awareness, problem-solving ability, and confidence. The initiative also shows how universities can build entrepreneurial ecosystems that connect learning with innovation, employability, sustainability, and national-level impact. Its development indicates that modest teaching practices can become scalable institutional innovations when supported by vision, structure, and purposeful partnerships.

Relevance: The presentation directly aligns with the symposium themes of higher educational leadership, research and innovation, entrepreneurship education, and capacity development. It offers a practical model for educators, academic leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen entrepreneurship education through scalable, practice-oriented, and impact-driven university initiatives, especially in emerging higher education contexts.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education; Higher Education Leadership; Capacity Development; Student Innovation

Edvisor: Making Classroom Teaching Visible, Complete, and Caring through AI-Powered Classroom Analytics

Dr Zengyi Yu

East China Normal University (ECNU)



Quality education depends not only on curriculum reform and institutional leadership, but also on what actually happens inside classrooms. However, classroom teaching is often difficult to observe at scale. Traditional lesson observation relies heavily on expert experience, fragmented notes, and post-lesson reflection, which may miss critical moments of teacher-student interaction, student engagement, and classroom discourse. This presentation introduces Edvisor, an AI-powered classroom analytics platform that transforms authentic classroom videos into visible, interpretable, and actionable evidence for teaching improvement.

Edvisor integrates multimodal classroom data, including audio, behavior, time allocation, interaction patterns, discourse, learning activities, and assessment evidence. Through AI-assisted analysis, the platform generates interactive dashboards and report outputs that help teachers and institutions understand classroom structure, interaction networks, questioning patterns, engagement changes, and student-level participation. The system is designed around three core principles: seeing clearly through accurate diagnosis, seeing completely through whole-classroom visibility, and seeing caringly through student-level insight and potential discovery.

The key contribution of Edvisor is not simply video analysis, but the construction of an evidence-based feedback workflow for teacher development. It provides both detailed reports for professional analysis and short executive summaries for daily teaching decisions. In pilot teacher-training contexts, AI-driven diagnostic feedback has supported visible teaching improvement and helped pre-service teachers refine classroom performance. The project is highly relevant to the symposium theme of artificial intelligence, innovation, and capacity development, as it demonstrates how AI can support teacher professional growth, strengthen institutional quality assurance, and advance SDG 4 by making quality teaching more measurable, improvable, and scalable.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Classroom Analytics; Teacher Development; Multimodal Learning Analytics

The Post-Humanist Shift: AI Challenges, Academic Leadership, and the Evolving “Idea of the University”

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The rapid advancement of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and the ubiquitous integration of Large Language Models (LLMs) represent one of the most profound disruptions in the history of global educational systems. As chatbots increasingly simulate human communication through sophisticated information processing and adaptive learning, Higher Education finds itself at a critical crossroads. Universities are currently grappling with a dual imperative: to accelerate their digital transformation while simultaneously engineering robust pedagogical frameworks that integrate LLMs ethically and effectively.

This presentation argues that we are witnessing the emergence of a new paradigm in knowledge selection, transmission, and processing. This shift fundamentally destabilizes the traditional power dynamics between educators and learners, rendering many classical organizational structures of the educational process obsolete. More importantly, it brings to the fore an existential question: is the centuries-old “Idea of the University” being irreversibly altered, and if so, what new model is emerging to take its place?

The purpose of this speech is to contribute to a critical reflection on the implications of AI regarding the enhancement or potential attrition of cognitive and social skills vital for human evolution. The analysis is structured around three foundational pillars:

- The Anthropocentric Pedagogy: Re-evaluating the core pillars of education through the lens of human-centered learning in an automated age.
- The Post-Humanist Transition: Examining the transformation of the humanistic approach as we shift toward a post-humanist model of communication and learning, driven by multimodal and advanced AI applications.
- The Role of Academic Leadership: Defining the responsibility of leaders in redefining the university’s mission within a fluid, volatile, and unstable society that appears increasingly threatened by its own technological innovations.

By synthesizing these elements, the presentation seeks to provide a roadmap for academic leadership to navigate the tension between technological innovation and the preservation of the essential academic values that define the university’s contribution to humanity.

Key words: Post-Humanism, Artificial Intelligence Challenges, Academic Leadership, Idea of the University, Educational Transformation

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in a Cross-Cultural Context –Insights from SDC's Educational Practices

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Graduate innovation and entrepreneurship education frequently remains confined within disciplinary and national boundaries, creating a persistent gap between classroom knowledge and the competencies required for real-world problem-solving. This case study of the Sino-Danish College (SDC) examines how an international joint educational institution can systematically integrate interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural collaboration, and multi-stakeholder engagement into a coherent pedagogical model. Drawing on experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and the Triple Helix framework (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), the analysis critically examines documented activities including collaborative conferences, intensive ideation events, multidisciplinary curricular modules, and structured industry engagements. The findings indicate that SDC embeds cross-cultural immersion across its pedagogical ecosystem—international and Chinese students co-construct solutions under authentic constraints—while simultaneously operationalizing interdisciplinarity through the deliberate integration of diverse knowledge domains, ranging from natural sciences to policy governance. These academic experiences are systematically bridged to practice through Triple Helix partnerships, wherein students directly engage with industry leaders and policymakers, facilitating the co-production of knowledge and the translation of theoretical insights into actionable strategies. The case demonstrates that cross-cultural innovation and entrepreneurship competence—conceptualized as opportunity identification, boundary-spanning collaboration, and adaptive problem-solving—emerges not from isolated curricular modules but from the deliberate convergence of interdisciplinary curricula, cross-cultural teamwork, and experiential engagement with innovation ecosystems. This model offers a scalable and theoretically grounded contribution to the conference theme of preparing globally oriented, industry-ready innovators, with broader implications for transnational higher education.

Keywords: Cross-cultural education, Innovation and entrepreneurship pedagogy, Interdisciplinary learning, Triple Helix model

Bridging the Rift: Capacity Development and Career Trajectories for International Social Science Students in a Deglobalizing World

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In an era of deglobalization, international social science students face significant career ambiguities due to the perceived “soft” nature of their disciplines, fluctuating employer recognition, and limited local market experience. Furthermore, non-EU students studying EU-centric policies often experience a geopolitical disconnect, underscoring a critical gap in institutional support within transnational academic networks. Employing a comparative case study approach rooted in firsthand student experiences, this paper examines the institutional support ecosystems of two distinct higher education models: a large-scale institution, King’s College London (KCL), and a specialized, small-scale academy, the Brussels School of Governance (BSoG) at VUB. The analysis reveals that while large universities excel at structural networking, they require early, culturally sensitive “career awareness awakening” initiatives during student intake. Conversely, smaller institutes offer tighter community bonds and impactful “learning-by-doing” practices, such as engagements with the EEAS and UN House, but lack formalized, digitalized career interfaces. Specialized schools must invest in structured digital UI networks to optimize resources and intentionally help non-EU students establish regional policy relevance. This study directly aligns with the theme of capacity development by offering actionable, student-centric micro-perspectives on how diverse higher education institutions can structurally enhance their institutional capabilities, rejuvenate global alumni resources, and foster sustainable talent growth amid geopolitical shifts.

Keywords: Capacity Development, Professional Growth, Higher Education Leadership, International Students

A Study on the Impact of Research Training Duration on the Innovative Ability of Top-Tier Chinese Science and Engineering Students

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In the context of a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, improving the cultivation of innovation ability in top-tier science and engineering students is crucial for building a reserve of scientific and technological innovation talents, enhancing comprehensive national strength, and achieving national rejuvenation. To explore the relationships among research training duration, achievement motivation, psychological resilience, and innovation ability among top-tier science and engineering students, a questionnaire survey was conducted among full-time undergraduates majoring in science and engineering from four Chinese “Double First-Class” construction universities. These students were enrolled in either the “Top-notch Undergraduate Training Program in Basic Disciplines”, the “Pilot Reform Program for Enrollment in Basic Disciplines”, or related specialized training classes. The results show that research training duration positively predicts the innovation ability of top-tier science and engineering students, and both achievement motivation and psychological resilience play significant positive moderating roles in this process. Psychological resilience serves as a significant facilitator of innovation ability and exerts a notable positive moderating effect. The moderating effects of achievement motivation and psychological resilience on the impact of research training duration on innovation ability demonstrate some degree of variability across different groups. Therefore, the enhancement of innovation ability among top-tier science and engineering students not only depends on the investment of research time, but also requires stimulating their intrinsic motivation to pursue success and systematically cultivating their psychological resilience to cope with challenges, thereby facilitating the transformation from research training to innovative output. Future top-tier talent cultivation models should, while strengthening research practice, enhance achievement motivation orientation guidance and psychological quality development, and establish a collaborative development education mechanism, so as to more effectively promote the continuous improvement of top-tier talents’ innovation ability.

Keywords: leadership trends, Qualitative enquiry, Operational decisions, Reactive leadership, Leadership assessment, Academic crisis preparedness

A Chinese Solution to Talent Cultivation and Leadership Building for International Organizations in Science and Engineering Universities

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With the vigorous development of global higher education and profound changes in the global governance landscape, cultivating high-caliber talents and strengthening their leadership for international organizations have become an important mission for science and engineering universities in China. Combining national development needs and school-running characteristics, Chinese institutions have explored a distinctive Chinese approach to talent training. This approach builds a hierarchical curriculum system of “Understanding China, Comprehending the World and Integrating China and the World”, alongside scientific competency evaluation criteria, and establishes a value-driven integrated teaching and assessment system. It adopts interdisciplinary education of arts, humanities, science and engineering, gives full play to disciplinary strengths, and cultivates students’ professional capabilities, cross-cultural communication skills and leadership in multilateral affairs. Supported by a four-in-one collaborative platform, it constructs a comprehensive practical training system. The practice has solved problems such as homogenized training and inadequate cooperation mechanisms, fostered numerous interdisciplinary talents with technical expertise, global vision and outstanding leadership, and offered a practical model for higher education institutions worldwide.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Classroom Analytics; Teacher Development; Multimodal Learning Analytics

Edvisor: Making Classroom Teaching Visible, Complete, and Caring through AI-Powered Classroom Analytics

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Quality education depends not only on curriculum reform and institutional leadership, but also on what actually happens inside classrooms. However, classroom teaching is often difficult to observe at scale. Traditional lesson observation relies heavily on expert experience, fragmented notes, and post-lesson reflection, which may miss critical moments of teacher-student interaction, student engagement, and classroom discourse. This presentation introduces Edvisor, an AI-powered classroom analytics platform that transforms authentic classroom videos into visible, interpretable, and actionable evidence for teaching improvement.

Edvisor integrates multimodal classroom data, including audio, behavior, time allocation, interaction patterns, discourse, learning activities, and assessment evidence. Through AI-assisted analysis, the platform generates interactive dashboards and report outputs that help teachers and institutions understand classroom structure, interaction networks, questioning patterns, engagement changes, and student-level participation. The system is designed around three core principles: seeing clearly through accurate diagnosis, seeing completely through whole-classroom visibility, and seeing caringly through student-level insight and potential discovery.

The key contribution of Edvisor is not simply video analysis, but the construction of an evidence-based feedback workflow for teacher development. It provides both detailed reports for professional analysis and short executive summaries for daily teaching decisions. In pilot teacher-training contexts, AI-driven diagnostic feedback has supported visible teaching improvement and helped pre-service teachers refine classroom performance. The project is highly relevant to the symposium theme of artificial intelligence, innovation, and capacity development, as it demonstrates how AI can support teacher professional growth, strengthen institutional quality assurance, and advance SDG 4 by making quality teaching more measurable, improvable, and scalable.

Keywords: University Governance and Management, Higher Education, University Community, Collegial Bodies

Universities as Architects of a Connected Entrepreneurship-Education Pipeline: Cultivating Regenerative Leaders across ASEAN

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Efforts to prepare future leaders concentrate at the higher-education level, yet most students reach university with their dispositions already shaped by years of schooling, and entrepreneurship is still treated as an economic add-on rather than a leadership capability. This presentation reframes entrepreneurship as the capacity to design and build new systems: new economic models, social norms and institutions. It argues that universities are uniquely placed to architect a connected entrepreneurship-education pipeline spanning primary, secondary and tertiary education. Higher education's contribution is to lead and convene this continuum, not act only at its final stage.

The argument grows out of two efforts the author led in Indonesia. The first, Kampus Merdeka Mandiri (2022 to 2024), was a national higher-education programme at the Ministry of Education; its MBKM Index, built on entrepreneurial- and engaged-university theory, rose from 0.37 to 0.62, and by 2023 the programme had convened a multi-stakeholder ecosystem of 3,945 education institutions, schools among them, alongside industry, government and community partners. The second, Sociopreneur Indonesia's teachers' training programme, assessed 499 teachers across 239 primary and secondary schools using the EntreComp, DigComp 2.2 and financial-competence frameworks.

Both found the same pattern. Ethical and sustainable thinking was the strongest competence (3.63 of 4.00 among teachers), translated into more than 154 innovation projects, yet a shared "prudence gap" left risk-taking, data literacy and resource mobilisation the weakest at both school and university level. Universities can act here: partnering with schools, opening entrepreneurship labs where school projects can mature, mentoring teachers, and recognising school learning through micro-credentials. Students would then arrive equipped, and universities would shape the pipeline they draw from. Keeping higher-education leadership at the centre, the work ties entrepreneurship education and capacity development to the responsible use of data and AI, offering ASEAN an evidence-informed proposal for cultivating regenerative leaders.

Keywords: regenerative leadership, entrepreneurship education, higher-education leadership, ASEAN

A Systems Approach to University Transformation

Dr Shilpa Deshpande Kaistha

Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University Kanpur



Higher education institutions worldwide are increasingly expected to deliver excellence in research, innovation, entrepreneurship, internationalization, digital transformation, sustainability and societal impact while responding to rapid technological and socio-economic change. Despite considerable investments in these strategic priorities, institutional transformation often remains fragmented because initiative is developed independently rather than as components of a coherent institutional strategy. We advance the conceptual proposition that University transformation is not cumulative outcome of successful initiatives, but the result of purposeful integration across interconnected institutional systems.

Drawing on a reflective institutional analysis of the transformation journey of Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU), India (2022-2026), we propose a Systems Approach to University transformation comprising seven interconnected institutional systems: Leadership, Learning, Knowledge creation, Innovation and Enterprise, Global Engagement, Digital Transformation, and Societal Impact- that collectively influence institutional performance. Rather than functioning as isolated priorities, these systems are viewed as dynamic and mutually reinforcing processes that collectively shape institutional adaptability, resilience and long- term impact.

The framework is informed by institutional practise, including the development of an integrated innovation ecosystem, strengthening research and intellectual property support, expanded international partnerships, faculty capacity building initiatives, sustainability programmes and institution wide digital and AI readiness efforts. These experiences demonstrate how purposeful integration across institutional systems can create greater value than isolated institutional achievements.

We further introduce the concept of Institutional Integration Capacity as a potential lens for understanding how effectively universities align the above systems. It proposes that future research should focus on developing an Institutional Integration Capacity to assess the strength of connections across institutional systems and their contribution to long term transformation.

By shifting the discourse from institutional expansion to institutional integration, this paper offers a practise-informed conceptual framework for public universities seeking sustainable, context-sensitive transformation and establishes a foundation for comparative international research and collaborative institutional development.

Keywords: institutional transformation, systems thinking, interconnected systems, institutional integration, public university

Strengthening Policy, Practice, and Partnerships for Entrepreneurship Education in South Asia

Dr Himali Jinadasa

UNESCO Entrepreneurship Education (EE-Net) South Asia Chapter

Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a critical pathway for advancing inclusive growth, youth empowerment, and sustainable development across South Asia. Yet, despite the region's demographic dividend and expanding innovation potential, entrepreneurship education remains unevenly integrated into national policies, school curricula, and TVET systems. This abstract presents insights from the UNESCO Entrepreneurship Education Network (EENET) – South Asia Chapter on strengthening policy coherence, pedagogical practice, and multi-stakeholder partnerships to build future-ready learners and resilient entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The paper highlights three interlinked priorities. First, policy strengthening requires embedding entrepreneurship education within national education frameworks, aligning with SDG 4.4, and ensuring that green, digital, and social entrepreneurship competencies are systematically integrated from primary to tertiary levels. Second, pedagogical transformation** calls for learner-centred, experiential, and context-relevant approaches that cultivate creativity, problem-solving, and agency. Evidence from regional programmes demonstrates that entrepreneurship education enhances academic performance, employability, and youth confidence when delivered through active learning and real-world engagement.

Third, partnerships—across governments, National Commissions for UNESCO, private sector actors, civil society, and youth networks—are essential to scaling impact. The South Asia Chapter's collaborative initiatives illustrate how cross-border knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and community-based innovation hubs can strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems, particularly for women and marginalized groups.

The abstract concludes that advancing entrepreneurship education in South Asia requires a coordinated regional strategy that bridges policy and practice, fosters innovation-driven learning environments, and mobilizes partnerships that reflect UNESCO's commitment to inclusive, sustainable, and transformative education. Strengthening these pillars will enable South Asian learners to thrive in the future of work and contribute meaningfully to resilient and equitable societies.

Keywords: Strengthening Policy, Practice, and Partnerships for Entrepreneurship Education in South Asia

Strategic Partnerships for Resilient Technical Universities

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This study focuses on a specific student cohort within Global South mobility: postgraduate students from China pursuing advanced degrees in Egypt. Drawing on a two-year field study in Egypt, this research utilizes qualitative methods—including in-depth interviews, participant observations, and field logs—to investigate how these students cultivate self-actualizing “agency” and manifest an “inclusive community” identity despite systemic adversities such as language barriers, policy instabilities, and fragile academic ecosystems. In doing so, this study challenges the classic push-pull theoretical framework. The findings are three-fold: First, beyond push-pull factors, students exercise comprehensive motivational navigation. Their cross-border pursuit is driven not merely by advanced credentialism, but by a synergistic convergence of professional identity, cross-border competence, and Egypt’s niche institutional advantages, reflecting calculated and autonomous choices. Second, amidst institutional adversities, students employ “host-to-agent” action strategies. Supported by relative financial autonomy as a material foundation, a resourceful external environment, and positive home-institution synergy, students mobilize diverse adaptive strategies to awaken their subjective consciousness, successfully transforming themselves from passive sojourners into active agents. Third, these agentic strategies yield multi-dimensional appreciation and community identity consolidation. The trajectory culminates in varying degrees of value addition across social networks, career orientation, linguistic proficiency, and resume capital, which ultimately solidifies their collective identity as a distinct cross-border student community. This study enriches the theoretical understanding of motivational dynamics, adversity adaptation, and identity reshaping among specific postgraduate cohorts in South-South migration. Furthermore, it offers practical insights for the cross-border cultivation, governmental management, stratified support systems, and international exchange policies concerning postgraduate and high-level talent international education.

Keywords: Global South mobility; Chinese Postgraduate students in Egypt; Identity reconstruction; Qualitative research

Industry-as-a-Laboratory: A Sustainable Model for Engineering Education in Resource-Limited Context (Developing Economies)

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University of Eastern Finland



This research presents a unique case of establishing a Department of Mining and Process Engineering under extreme resource constraints at the College of Engineering and Technology, Eritrea Institute of Technology. Initiated in 2011 in response to the rapid expansion of Eritrea's mining sector, the program was developed without any budget for laboratories or workshops that are the core components traditionally considered essential in engineering education. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research analyzes how strategic collaboration with key stakeholders, including the relevant ministry for the mining sector, The national mining company, and the active mining company that was already in operation, enabled the creation of an industry-embedded learning model. In this model, real mining facilities replaced conventional academic laboratories through structured industrial visits and internships. The findings demonstrate that this 'industry-as-a-laboratory' approach not only compensated for infrastructural limitations of the college but also enhanced students' practical competencies and professional readiness. Graduates of the program have shown exceptional professional certification performance in the industry and rapid career advancement into senior engineering roles as per the current assessment through qualitative study engaging them. These graduate outcomes highlight the effectiveness of the model. The study contributes to the literature on engineering education in resource-constrained environments and offers policy-relevant insights for developing countries seeking scalable and sustainable educational innovations. Methodologically, this study contributes by combining case study research with reflective practitioner inquiry, offering a hybrid approach well-suited for capturing innovation in real-world educational leadership contexts. It also supports the development of a context-sensitive framework for industry-embedded engineering education, which can inform both future research and policy design. Finally, the paper discusses how these results inform design and implementation of engineering programs today.

Keywords: Engineering education, Work-integrated learning, Industry-academia collaboration, Resource-constrained innovation, Mining engineering, Experiential learning

Roundtable Discussion on Capacity Development:

1. How can higher education institutions successfully transition from traditional Capacity Building (Dependency Mode) to Capacity Development (Empowerment Mode), and what institutional and cultural changes are required to sustain this transformation?

(Prof. Melita Kovacevic, Dr Anthony Antoine, Prof. Marieta du Plessis, Prof. Pius Coxwell Achanga & Prof. Romeela Mohee)

2. The proposed 4Cs framework—Capacity Searching, Capacity Sharing, Capacity Strengthening, and Capacity Sustaining—offers a new approach to capacity development. Which of these four components presents the greatest challenge in practice, and why?

(Prof. Karanam Pushpanadham, Prof. Catarina Tivane Nhamposse, Prof. Marcin Górski, Greg William Misiaszek, Prof. Karen François & Dr. Anwar Rumjaun)

3. What strategies can ensure that partnerships between institutions in the Global North and the Inclusive Global South become genuinely equitable, mutually beneficial, and sustainable, rather than reinforcing dependency?

(Prof. Arunachalam Narayanan, Dr. Yan Wang, Dr. Mustapha Almasi, Prof. Weihui Mei, Dr. Vickram Bissonauth & Mr. Avish Bundhoo)

4. In what ways can higher education institutions strengthen research, innovation, and community engagement while simultaneously improving access, quality, governance, and workforce development within a capacity development framework?

(Prof. Xavier Justino Muianga, Prof. Sanjay Tiwari, Prof. Chenghua Lin, Prof. Catarina Tivane Nhamposse/Prof. Alberto Augusto Macuácuá & Prof. Hyleen Mariaye)

5. The abstract emphasizes leadership, collaboration, and breaking down institutional ‘silos.’ What practical mechanisms can universities adopt to promote cross-border, cross-disciplinary, and cross-institutional collaboration that leads to lasting capacity development?

(Dr. Ludovic Thanay, Prof. Melita Kovacevic, Dr. Mrinal Mukherjee, Dr. Nikhil Nagarkar & Dr. Suraj Juddoo)

6. Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, what indicators or measures should be used to assess whether higher education institutions have achieved true Capacity Development (Empowerment Mode) rather than merely implementing Capacity Building (Dependency Mode) initiatives?

(Prof. Basseer Jeeawody, Prof. Sarah-Jane Mintey, Mr. Yograj Seebaluck, Mrs. Kavina Rambhunjun & Mr. Nitin Ramphul)

