Hong Kong's Cross-border Research Collaborations in the Global Knowledge System

In an increasingly interconnected world, cross-border research collaborations are essential for advancing scientific knowledge and enhancing the impact of academic research. Despite this, the unique research system of Hong Kong (HK) remains underexplored within the broader literature on global research systems and collaborations. HK's role as a bridge between East and West, combined with its handover to Mainland China, the world's leading research system by publication volume, provides a distinctive context for examining the evolution of HK's cross-border research collaborations and the factors influencing their citation impact. This project will address the highlighted gap by employing a sequential mixed-methods approach, beginning with a quantitative component followed by a qualitative one. The quantitative component will investigate the evolution of HK's global scientific social capital since 1997, a major shift for HK as it was handed over to Mainland China. The quantitative component will also explore the factors impacting the scientific influence of these collaboratively published research papers. Moreover, the qualitative component will investigate the alignment of the patterns found in the quantitative component of the project with HK's public policy documents guiding research endeavours, especially the very recent policy papers focusing on making HK a higher education hub. The qualitative part will also include interviews with HK-based researchers, who are at the front line of knowledge production. The interviews will provide further explanations about the quantitative findings and explore HK-based researchers' perceptions of HK's research collaborations over the years. The project aims to contribute to knowledge by shedding light on the complexities of cross-border research collaborations in a region characterised by a unique status that includes widespread use of English in a non-Western society and a political landscape with ambitious goals to establish a hub of higher education and knowledge. Additionally, it will provide evidence-based policy recommendations to enhance HK's global research visibility and impact, supporting the strategic objectives in international academic rankings. On a practical level, the research will guide individual researchers and institutional managers in identifying collaboration strategies that most effectively enhance scientific impact. By filling a significant gap in the literature and offering actionable insights, this research will support the development of more effective research policies and practices in HK. The findings are expected to have broader implications for the Greater Bay Area and other regions and institutions aiming to strengthen their cross-border research collaborations and academic impact.