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Conference Report and Intelligence Briefing

The 15th Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities (ACAH2024)
The 14th Asian Conference on Cultural Studies (ACCS2024)
The 15th Asian Conference on the Social Sciences (ACSS2024)

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Introduction

In the wake of a global pandemic that exacerbated already existing crises, societies have become increasingly polarised. Developed countries are fighting with a rising cost of living, developing countries are struggling with climate change and natural crises, while war and conflict seem to plague all continents. All crises seem to be interlinked and endanger social cohesion and democratic dialogue. Violent protests are erupting all over the world for different reasons, as social polarisation reaches new heights.

Often, we hear decision-makers discuss the 'what' and 'hows' of measures to combat sources of conflict, such as sanctions and negotiations between warmongering nations, social safety nets to shield the poor, or sustainable energy consumption and climate change mitigation. Political leaders tend to take those reactive measures, while failing to act in a preventive or mitigating manner. Contemporary societies can be seen as lacking in fostering ethical thinking among their populations, replacing the virtue of caring for others with individualistic thinking and sometimes violence. Whether through formal or informal institutions, it seems that we have been wired to think about what and how we do things, without asking why we do the things we do.

Social polarisation does not uniquely stem from differences in our definitions of what and how we do things. It is also rooted in our different definitions of certain values and the belief that ours is the only 'correct' definition. We might think that we are doing 'good' things in the world, but what does the 'good' really mean? Whether it is within practical applications in everyday life, or public and social policies, misinterpretations and miscommunication of values can lead to conflict and polarisation.

Societies are in desperate need of open-minded, respectful, inquiring, ethical, and caring citizens, who engage in peaceful dialogue with each other and are accepting

of the different 'other'. Traditionally, it has been the role of formal and informal education to transmit such values to young people and mould them into responsible citizens. Whether they learn it at home, mimicking parents' behaviour, from engaging with their social networks, both physical and digital, or at school, children are capable of learning from a young age what it means to be respectful and ethical.

While society, media, and political institutions have a responsibility to create responsible citizens, they often fail to provide non-judgemental spaces that allow for diversity and political dialogue. Instead, universities have, time and time again, proven that they are capable of compensating for the lack in providing platforms for discussion that the media and political institutions are displaying. University campuses have seen young adults speaking up and discussing controversial socio-political topics, challenging a sometimes adverse status quo. Where societies, media, and politics fail to alleviate social polarisation, the university can become a powerful ally to social cohesion.

Within the context of the university, the role of the Arts and Humanities has been paramount in educating future citizens to see the world with an open and curious mind, unbiased by the learnings of social ties and kinship. Foreign languages, literature, and various forms of art can be excellent examples of how different words have different meanings, and how one's work can be interpreted in various ways.

It is these crucial curricula of the Arts and Humanities that the current corporate universities are threatening to eliminate. Especially in countries that inherited the Anglo-Saxon education system, the corporate-style university is overtaking all other forms in offering commercially viable courses at the cost of 'non-essential' programmes. In a haste to feed the labour market with graduates of specialised expertise, universities are turning into a non-critical, unethical, and profit-oriented factory, capable of furthering the already existing rift among members of society. There is a need for education to revert to cultivating an ethic of care among current and future citizens, who will critically think about social issues, question unethical public and social policies, and participate actively in political discussions for a better future.

The keynote speeches and plenary presentations at the IAFOR [Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities \(ACAH2024\)](#), [Cultural Studies \(ACCS2024\)](#), and [Social Sciences \(ACSS2024\)](#) that took place in May 2024 in Tokyo, Japan, have highlighted the importance of cultivating within society an ethic of care based on aspirational values and respect for diversity. The newly introduced *Forum* discussion at the end of the plenary days cemented the argument for policy-makers to pay attention to, and care for citizens' actual needs by exercising responsible global citizenship.





Arts and Humanities Under Attack: Why Should We Save It? And How?

Across universities, the arts, humanities, and social sciences are undermined as 'superfluous,' impractical and disconnected from reality. [*'The Work of the University in Perilous Times.'*](#) **Professor Donald E. Hall** (Binghamton University, United States) presented the pressing situation in the United States where funders and politicians influence universities to undermine the significance of these subjects. These phenomena disrupt the integrative learning process essential in today's socio-political landscapes and reflect the concerning situation on academic freedom. Drawing from his own experience, Hall delivered his keynote addressing how the arts, cultural studies, and languages gave him a livable life as a 'misfit kid,' offering perspectives that the status quo of a person's life is not the only life possible. In summation, the changes in sentiment in universities' administration to shut down language departments are not only selective in what students should or should not learn but also a reductive intention to limit the students' horizons to learn only what exists within the context of the United States.

Hall calls for 'academic allies' and interdisciplinarity to save the arts, humanities, and social sciences in universities; universities should offer not only knowledge or vocational training but also the space to educate students to broaden their consciousness and deepen their understanding of the world's complexities. The ability to think beyond what happens in their classrooms and campuses builds the potential capacity for future interventions in global crises effectively. Beyond commercially viable courses such as engineering and business, the arts and humanities offer different global perspectives that equipped students with practical skills. For example, subjects like modern languages and history teach how to read, write, and communicate, which are essential skills in the current workforce and help students adapt to wider opportunities. Academic allies are needed in building bridges between the arts and humanities and social sciences to the 'tech-bound' fields to emphasise their contributions to society and reduce employment anxiety among parents and students. This will prevent the shutting down of the subjects that are deemed less commercially viable departments, and keep the opportunity for students to learn and broaden their perspectives.

Cultures, Diversity, and Inclusivity in Universities

Universities and conferences are spaces and places where people from diverse backgrounds meet and explore differences in perspectives, thoughts, and cultures. Citing the work by Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Truth and Method,' Hall highlights how humanity grows through encountering different worldviews and exploring these differences. Universities today should train students to be able to see the world from different viewpoints, raise awareness, and consider the needs of people other than themselves. Learning about the world widens students' perspectives in realising biases, limitations, and how the self is bound by their cultures and pasts.

Hall argues that the recent trend of 'diversity reversal' is killing the process of learning through differences. Diverse thoughts and ideas generated through the arts and literature of different cultures challenge what one knows and affect how one views the world. The interpretative learning process decenters learners from existing beliefs and knowledge and challenges the 'One Truth' concept of political fundamentalism. In the United States, politicians are influencing the shutting down of diversity offices, banning discussion of differences, and silencing dissent, leading to the incremental return to negative conservative ideas such as sexism, racism, and homophobia. The need to maintain the status quo, or return to the past, is derived from the fear of change and uncertainty of those in power. Hall argues that this critical time of threat to diversity and inclusivity resembles that of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, where authority leads and controls what the truth is, limiting diversity and possibilities on how one views and interprets the world. Similarly, the keynote presentation [***'Possibilities of Change: Surviving the Times of Conflict'***](#) by **Dr Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry** (Central University of Gujarat, India) demonstrates the overlapping of multisectoral and multi-level efforts in addressing world issues, highlighting the importance of respect for human rights, in addition to the respect and awareness of diversity and inclusivity.



Understanding diversity and differences helps in creating an inclusive, better future. In his keynote presentation ['Can Today's Universities Contribute to a Better Future?'](#) **Professor Umberto Ansaldo** (The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong) points to a society with less poverty, less violence, and a better climate as the definition of a 'better future'. The question is whether universities today are in a position to offer future generations what they need to contribute to such a future. Professor Ansaldo points out that students want institutions that are ethical and just. Corporate academic culture emphasises hierarchy and homogeneity. Crucially, corporate universities exploit staff and students in the interest of profit. In addition, in profit-driven institutions, the humanities and social sciences have been steadily culled in the interest of maximising revenue. In this sense, corporate universities are not in the best position to contribute to a better future. Professor Ansaldo argues that beyond teaching and embodying diversity and ethics, universities must train students in collaboration and conflict resolution. In addition to teaching what the historical, cultural, or economic differences of human societies mean, universities should train students to navigate through diverse interpretations of these contemporary issues critically. Echoing Professor Hall's presentation on the importance of the arts, humanities and social sciences, Professor Ansaldo highlights the importance of language and culture programmes, among others, which have also been victims of corporate thinking in academia. Students in these classes learn not only to be competent in other languages but also to understand different viewpoints, ways of thinking, and reasoning. Such insights provide students with the intellectual curiosity and framework to then approach and engage in wider global issues. Professor Ansaldo underscores the importance for institutions to 'walk the walk' and be truly not-for-profit, and use their resources for the core activities of academia, namely teaching and research, as well as a fair treatment of students and staff to minimise student debt and precarious workforces.



Sole Custody: History and Culture at a Turning Point

The panel discussion on [‘Ethics and Care in Sole Custody Policy’](#) shows historical and cultural norms pivotal in Japanese society that led to the change in familial structure and the trend of sole custody. The Japanese family holds to the value of *koseki*, meaning the ‘membership of a household,’ and a child must be attached to one household or the other in the case of divorce. Prior to World War II, the male householder had the right to control household members, including children and wives. At that time, in the case of divorce, custody generally fell to the father. However, the transition from an agricultural-based society to one of urban modernity brought a change to Japanese families. **Dr Ayako Harada** (Nagoya University, Japan) observed that the gender division of labour in which males work outside and women are stay-at-home housewives leads to more women getting child custody as it is the women’s duty to take care of the children. In addition to the gender perspective, rapid urbanisation during the 1960s led women to become more economically capable to provide for their children. The *koseki* value holds strongly in the psyche of the Japanese, so much so that **Mr Timothy Langley** (Langley Esquire, Japan) suggests that even today, in about 80% of the cases neither parent wants joint custody as they believe the child should only belong to one household. Responding to the title of the panel ‘Ethics and Care,’ Langley argues it is not right to take a child, the product of the union of two people, into sole custody.

However, a new change in the law (May 2024) will allow joint custody within the next two years. Amidst this hopeful and positive development, the panel points to possible limitations on cultural values and the lack of government commitment and effective law enforcement. Dr Harada views that while this law is a good development in allowing ‘options’ for the divorced couple, it does not solve the parental conflicts and their effect on the child. The change to ‘Western-style’ parenting is needed in Japanese society, all for the sake of the children. Langley is pessimistic that this law will change anything. He views Japanese society as still holding onto the family tradition and the judicial systems are still all geared towards sole custody. From the international perspective, Japan is the only country in the G7 that has the sole custody regime, and it has become problematic for foreign nationals who were not aware of this law before undergoing the custodial process. The change in allowing joint custody is partly due to international influence, as Japan is one of the signatories of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

Additionally, **Professor Grant Black** (Chuo University, Japan) states that there is not yet a state mechanism to enforce visitations, compensations, or agreements between the parents. Although the law will be implemented within two years, it will be superficial unless the government introduces supportive measures to induce this policy change. He argues that Japan should fulfil its commitment to international conventions of which it is signatory, not only the Hague Convention but also the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Langley concludes that the policy is moving slower than society in Japan, and an effective mechanism should be implemented to drive this change, so as to ensure ‘sole custody’ does not turn into ‘parental kidnapping.’ The current change, Langley views, is only to ‘calm the temperature’ of international pressure, as Japanese lawmakers care a lot about how Japan is perceived overseas.



Co-Parenting vs. Sole Custody: For Parents or the Child?

When discussing ethics and care in divorces, most discussion focuses on who gets child custody, but not on the effects the divorce has on the child. The panellists highlighted the importance of including the child's voice and well-being into consideration. **Professor Rokuro Tabuchi** (Sophia University, Japan) proposed that joint custody can enhance the child's well-being, by facilitating visitation or child support, in contrast to the complete cut-off of one of the parents. Dr Harada suggests that since the single-custody-only policy has been enforced since 1947, 90% of mothers get custody of the child, which leads the child to lack meaningful connection with the non-custodial parent. In addition to co-parenting, **Professor Noriko Odagiri** (Tokyo International University, Japan) proposes that the government should require the completion of a mandatory parenting programme before the divorce is finalised. This parenting programme is a tailor-made family therapy programme specifically designed to support children involved in parental conflicts. Ensuring the child's voice is heard by professional psychologists, legal, and mental health professionals, and not influenced by the custodial parent, is crucial in identifying the best interest of the child. Professor Tabuchi points out in addition that children's voices are missing from the divorce process as they were viewed as the household's property, neglecting that children have the right to keep in touch with both of their biological parents after divorce.

However, co-parenting is not always the best option for children involved in parental conflict. Professor Odagiri proposed that joint custody has a better outcome for children's well-being than single custody if no domestic violence is involved. The custodial parent will act as the gatekeeper in keeping the violent parents away from the child. Similarly, Dr Harada views that sole custody may be a better option for children in households with a history of domestic violence and child abuse. Black added to the discussion that while domestic violence can be an issue of concern, it has been used as a tool to gain sole custody. Black and Odagiri proposed that a proper mechanism for assessing domestic violence should be in place to allow joint custody and visitation.

The Roots of Social Polarisation

In his keynote presentation ["Navigating Polarising Discourses: Cultivating Values-Based Literacies in a Multimodal Society"](#), **Professor Johan Edelheim** (Hokkaido University, Japan) discussed how we can deal with the increased polarisation within our contemporary societies by focusing on why we do certain things, as opposed to *what* and *how* we do them.

Echoing the ideas expressed by panellists [Professor Howe and Professor Da Silva during IAFOR's March conference in Tokyo](#), Professor Edelheim also attributed social polarisation to the process of 'othering'. While the panel at the March conference focused on the abstract socio-psychological meaning of 'othering', Professor Edelheim focused on the practical mechanism behind this division. There are various modes (linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial) of meaning-making used by all information producers and consumers, this is called 'multimodality'. As meaning-making entities, we all use multiple modalities and often prefer one mode over another. This means that there can be a discrepancy between what someone broadcasts and the meaning that the recipient constructs. Therein lies the reason for much conflict within society which is based on misunderstandings or a misconstruction of realities. It is exactly this ambiguity that media and the entertainment industries are leveraging to manipulate society's behaviour.

Edelheim continued that in our contemporary societies, we tend to give precedence to some modalities over others, thereby signalling that there is more value to some than others. Values are expressed through action, so whatever our choices or actions may be, they are based on the values we hold. The problem with societies today is that we focus too much on the action itself, instead of looking at what shaped that action.

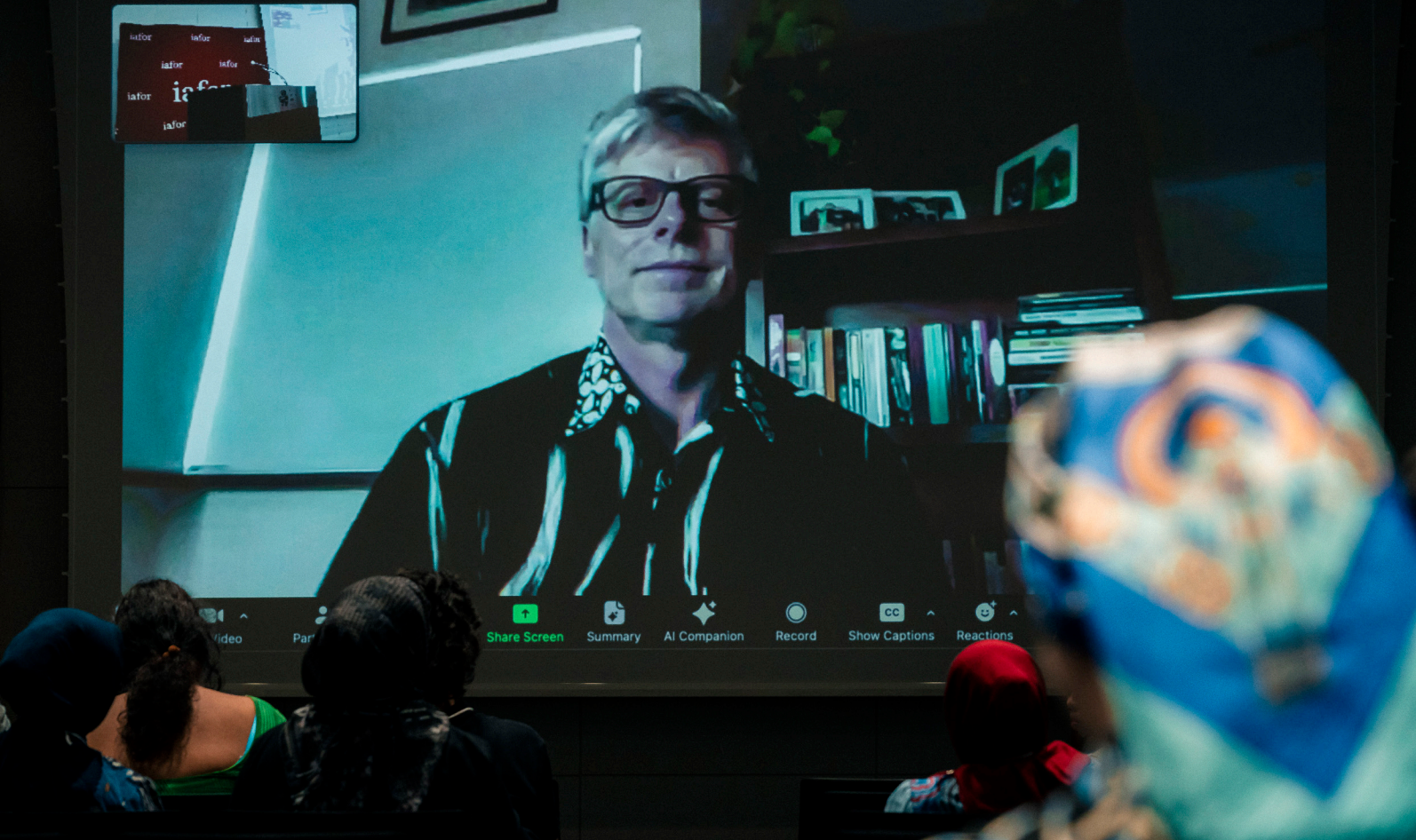


In more abstract terms, Edelman said we tend to focus more on the ontology ('how' we do something) and the epistemology ('what' we do) of actions, instead of their axiology ('why' we do something). Universities, for example, place a lot of emphasis on ontology and epistemology: what is being taught and how it is being taught are of importance, especially to the corporate university. It is not a surprise that many corporate universities around the world are attempting to remove Humanities from their programmes altogether, in the name of efficiency and financial gain. Students are supposed to become experts in their fields and go on to tackle environmental, socio-political, and financial crises as they arise in their professions, but nobody is questioning why these crises arise in the first place. For example, 'why' are we over-consuming? 'Why' do we choose to move by car rather than public transport? Those are choices that contribute to climate change, and they are based on axiological criteria (pertaining to values/the 'good'), not ontology or epistemology. Universities and society at large forget to look at the root cause of the problem: why we do what we do.

This is evidently observed in the fact that young graduates entering the job market lack the basic skills that employers desperately seek: critical and creative thinking, problem-solving skills, negotiation and conflict-resolution skills, and interpersonal skills. And whilst graduates are literate they are not taught to be multiliterate; to interpret messages in multiple modalities. Universities that are increasingly focused on becoming profitable corporations are endangering the future of young people by neglecting to teach them these skills, which are best taught through the Humanities, that teach us why we act in a certain way.

For this reason, Professor Edelman argues that there should be more emphasis on axiology - the 'why' of things. To tackle the increased polarisation within society, we need to foster a values-based society. Polarisation does not happen because we have different values. It happens because we have different ontological worldviews, and because of epistemological conservatism. We need to look at how other people view 'goodness'. If we presume that everyone has the same perception of what is 'good', then we will only talk within our own echo chamber. This does not encourage active listening and dialogue, which is required to mitigate polarisation. When we realise that other people have different definitions of 'goodness', that is when we start making meaningful changes.





How Different Interpretations of History Manifest in Societies

The impact that differences in ontological and epistemological worldviews have on society can also be observed in socio-political and economic situations of 'othering' created by satellite communications. In his keynote presentation on ["Satellite Constellations and National Communities"](#), **Professor Thor Kerr** (Curtin University, Australia) discussed how the introduction of satellite constellations relates to national communities, pertaining to a wider discussion on social imagination around national communities and telecommunications. Specifically, the recent introduction of SpaceX's Starlink satellites, an American-owned telecommunications provider, in Indonesia has raised concerns around authorisation, regulation, and monopoly of telecommunications in the country. Several prominent figures in Indonesia are worried that Starlink has not only the potential to bankrupt the national companies in the ICT industries but also lead to separatism. It is seen by some as a threat to the Indonesian national community. However, these developments can also reinforce the national community, in a sense that it forces the national community to define itself and make decisions on what and how to regulate.

There is, however, a more important question of whether to regulate or not to regulate at all, and this decision should be seen from the perspective of why there is a need to regulate. Within this question lies the answer as to why the introduction of a foreign-owned telecommunications provider causes such a rift within Indonesian society. To make his point, Professor Kerr contrasts the introduction of satellite communications between two countries with a colonial history, namely, Indonesia and Australia; while in Indonesia the introduction of Starlink is frowned upon, it has been celebrated in Australia.



The difference in response to this can be attributed to the different understandings of the history of telecommunications between Australia and Indonesia, from telegraph, then radio, and now satellite communication. Although both countries have experienced colonisation, they had very differing experiences as the colonised. Telecommunications heritage tends to be recognised in Australia, because the colonised Indigenous people were treated as part of the colonial project. Women of Aboriginal and Asian heritage at radio stations were treated as important because they controlled domestic and international communications and situations of emergency coordination. On the other hand, in Indonesia, telecommunications are associated with oppressive colonisation, during which Indonesians were not included in the development process. Indonesia's success in the struggle for independence relied at least in part on access to radio communications, as the Declaration of Independence was broadcast nationwide. Therefore, telecommunications and nationalism go hand-in-hand in Indonesia.

Circling back to Professor Edelheim's argument on understanding different ontological and epistemological worldviews through examining people's values, it is important to understand what 'freedom of speech' and what 'inclusiveness' mean to both Indonesia and Australia, but also to SpaceX as a multinational company engaging with different worldviews. The recent use of Starlink satellites by Ukraine as a means for military action against Russia, for example, is a way in which the company engages in 'controversial' political issues. Russia's interception of Starlink's signals, as well as SpaceX blocking this unauthorised access, willingly or unwillingly assisting Ukraine in its military operations, may reveal how multinational companies get involved with contested notions of national narratives and territories. Regulation as an action, and authorised access within a national territory, can be contentious topics that are best negotiated through understanding the complex perspectives that people of a nation come from.



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The Forum: Discussions on Global Citizenship

The complex debate on how to foster dialogue and understanding between people within national and international boundaries was further discussed during the inaugural session of *The Forum*. For the first time during IAFOR's Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities, Cultural Studies, and Social Sciences in Tokyo, IAFOR introduced a new project that is meant to harness the intellectual insights and expertise of our diverse community of academics, educators, practitioners, and people 'on the ground' to speak up and share their insights on Global Citizenship.

Motivated by the current contentious landscape of the world, be that armed conflict, genocide, ecological crisis, food insecurity, or the rising cost of living, it is evident that we, academics, educators, and practitioners, need to open up a different round of discussions to that of policy-makers, on how we can work together towards building more peace and harmony. Peace education has been a focal point in these discussions, and is a significant theme that is running through our conferences as well.

In fact, at our March conference in Tokyo (ACEID/ACP/AGen2024), we hosted a panel discussion on [Communication & Education for Peace](#). During the Q&A session, a delegate raised the point that 'global citizenship education' is an essential part of peace education, but the 'how to' remains a complex issue. With this as a starting point, IAFOR chose the topic of 'Global Citizenship' as the topic of the first-ever Forum session, where we asked delegates to discuss the following: what a global citizen is, what the attributes of responsible global citizenship are, what some threats to exercising global citizenship are, and what they do in the classroom or in their respective fields, as educators and practitioners, to foster a global identity within their students.

While the initial questions guiding *The Forum* discussion focused on the 'what' and 'how' of global citizenship application, it is astounding how discussants naturally directed the flow of the debate towards the 'why' without any prompting. This further underscores the importance of axiology and the cultivation of critical thinking, while also making a case for the repositioning of the Humanities within the core of education. For a transcript of the responses recorded at *The Forum* at ACAH/ACCS/ACSS2024, please see the Appendix.

In sum, our IAFOR community expressed both aspirational but also notably realistic views of what a global citizen is, and what attributes such a person would have while showing a clear understanding of what the limitations to the exercise of global citizenship are. A quite controversial perspective shared among experienced delegates in both developed and developing countries is that the concept of 'global citizenship' is overused, misused, inefficient in fostering a global identity, and alienated from the worldview of the everyday person.

The Forum participants' discussions were aligned with the main themes that IAFOR identified back in February through the dissemination of a survey regarding emerging issues and trends. When discussing global citizenship, delegates referred to concepts of humanity and human intelligence, such as tolerance, empathy, care, ethics, and inclusivity; political identities and responsibilities for an interconnected and peaceful co-existence, such as active participation, national versus global identities, sensitivity to global issues, and environmental sustainability; the interference of technology and AI in human relations; and the role of education in fostering a global and cosmopolitan identity.

A global citizen has humane characteristics, and global citizenship should aspire to serve humanity. Understanding and accepting cultural differences, showing respect for diversity, being intercultural and inclusive, and showing kindness, tolerance, and empathy are all aspirational attributes that a global citizen should have. Delegates underlined the importance of the relationship between people, fighting prejudice, and following inclusive processes, especially between the Global South and the Global North. In today's world, all people and countries are inevitably interconnected. In the words of an Italian delegate, 'Every big problem is everybody's problem'. Therefore, a global citizen should be sensitive and curious about world problems and crises.

This human intelligence, defined by all the aspirational characteristics that make a human human, is posited against Artificial Intelligence (AI). The advancement of technology and the recent proliferation of AI can endanger our human identity, which is essential for the exercise of responsible global citizenship. Delegates have stated that ethical conduct, transparency, and trust are important elements not only in the development process of technology but also during their political regulation, so as to ensure that technological advancement does not affect our sense of relating to each other.

Aside from the aspirational values of global citizens, participants also touched upon the perspective that only *being* a global citizen is not enough. One must also act as a global citizen to ensure that global citizenship is effective. As citizens, we also have obligations to fulfil as part of a greater community: for example, active participation and decision-making through voting are essential parts of democratic systems. No aspiration or imagination of a global community can become a reality if it is not followed by action.

However, political participation presupposes the assumption of a political identity. In the case of global citizens, political identity is a complex issue. According to the discussion, global citizens have a dual identity as global citizens who are also part of a self-governed national territory. Navigating between a national and global identity is not always easy, as conflicts of interest may arise. This has been an ongoing issue that supranational institutions have had to grapple with since their inception, leading to political deadlock and issues of misrepresentation. In reality, 'for a lot of people, Global Citizenship is an unavoidable reality that they have to deal with... and can't opt out of', as a delegate from the United Kingdom mentioned. Problems of political identity do not arise out of the exercise of global citizenship but are what define and should be solved by exercising responsible global citizenship.

Global citizenship should also be about combating poverty, promoting social justice and the common good, and contributing to economic development through sustainability. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be separated from any discussion on global citizenship. A global citizen is aware of the environmental consequences of his or her actions, is sensitive to his or her consuming patterns, and promotes sustainability. However, we should be careful how we use the term 'sustainability'. According to an experienced educator, curricula tend to focus too much on sustainability without making a conscious effort to understand what sustainability looks like in real life. Contemporary discussions on sustainability practices within the global citizenship framework tend to forget that indigenous or local communities have, for ages, practised sustainability. 'It looks like we are reinventing the wheel', but, in actuality, sustainability is already being practised. This is rooted in exclusive applications and definitions of global citizenship, denying the very foundation of inclusiveness, upon which global citizenship is being built.

This issue is closely related to the process of 'othering', viz. who is considered 'cosmopolitan' and who is not, which, according to the participants' discussions, is imposed upon the average person by policy-making entities. The Forum yielded a controversial perspective on global citizenship as being an elitist concept, imposed from the 'top-down, outside-inside' that leaves many people feeling left behind and disengaged from the global community.



"I've been developing global citizenship programmes for years now. It is becoming such an overused concept. It is what I call global-citizenship-washing (like green-washing), because many programmes are developed for the sake of labelling global citizenship and SDGs. We did surveys, and students replied 'oh I just finished this module, I'm done, check. I did my part of sustainability'... Students [mostly in more developed countries], claim that global issues are so far away from their experience ...that for them it's like 'if it doesn't bother me, why should I care?' This is a common trend in Europe"

– a delegate from the Netherlands

Another delegate from the United Kingdom asserted that 'among policy-makers and academics, the argument for global citizenship is considered already won, but among a lot of members of the populace, the argument hasn't even been made yet'. So, instead of looking at 'globalisation', delegates have proposed looking at 'cosmopolitanism'. Cosmopolitanism is seen as a grounds-up, inside-out process cultivated through education and touching upon the mentality of being a global citizen rather than the labelling. It is possible to maintain a cosmopolitan identity and care for the world, without the rigidity and political load that 'global citizenship' comes with. In fact, it was asserted that what we are witnessing in the world now is a phenomenon of 'de-globalisation' and 'de-risking', whereby countries move away from one another. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, countries are seeking ways to decrease exposure to risk by not depending on each other, when it comes to their supply chains, especially to pharmaceuticals. Therefore, the aspirational argument for global citizenship is happening within a reality of de-globalisation and de-risking.

Within this context, the role of education is of paramount importance in ensuring that a global mindset is instilled within students who may otherwise feel alienated from the rest of the world. Despite the realisation that education holds the key to the actualisation of global citizenship, educational systems, especially in the global South, are narrowly defined and detrimental to the exercise of global citizenship. Many delegates from developing countries have expressed their apprehension towards their institutional practices and their lack of vision, as they do not feel supported financially and academically to become part of a global campus. Especially in the lower levels of education, teachers often do not have the freedom to teach their own curricula, with national governments imposing limitations and their own national interests.

Despite these pessimistic perspectives regarding the effectiveness of labelling 'global citizenship' as such and teaching it in the classroom, our community of educators has listed creative ways in which they teach the concept of global citizenship and foster a global identity within their students. For example, some referred to actual projects they conduct, like encouraging students to participate in international conferences, field trips and fieldwork, or teaching them about contemporary issues and ethnic conflicts. Others mentioned teaching methods and content they use to sensitise their students, such as making them ponder about how their life, what they eat, and what they consume on social media is connected to a war-stricken country. Our IAFOR community of educators is finding ways to teach global citizenship without naming it as such.

The Forum at the ACAH/ACCS/ACSS2024 conference has generated very insightful comments on the concept of global citizenship, and sparked a provocation for future discussion: how do we get people to care? Before we establish the 'what' and the 'how' of being a global citizen, how can we ensure that future generations understand 'why' it is important to be a global citizen? As the plenary presentations and keynote speeches have also exemplified, there seems to be a discrepancy between what is taught and felt on campus and what is practised outside the university in society. A reorientation of educational goals, methods, and practices may be necessary to sensitise students and future citizens to pay attention to world problems and recognise the interconnectedness of the world. Education needs to touch upon the humanity of individuals. What better way is there than to give prominence to the Humanities and allow students to broaden their minds? These are leading thoughts that will be discussed during the next Forum session at the [European Conference on Education \(ECE\)](#), [Language Learning \(ECLL\)](#), [Arts & Humanities \(ECAH\)](#), and [Aging & Gerontology \(EGen\)](#) in London this July.



"Perhaps this is a bit controversial, but I think 'Global Citizenship' is not a good way to start this conversation. The term 'Global Citizenship' can be quite off-putting to a lot of people. Teaching from a phenomenon-based approach or from the perspective of the individual issues over time has the effect of creating a sense of global citizenship, even if we don't name it as such. So, I think, global citizenship as a concept is best reserved for academics outside of the actual practitioner side of things."

– a delegate from the United Kingdom



Conference Networking and Cultural Events

Networking events within our conference programmes provide designated spaces for open discussion, forming professional connections, and inspiring collaboration within and outside the conference venue. The ACAH/ACCS/ACSS2024 itinerary featured a variety of such spaces, sharing them alongside returning delegates and new members alike, as well as local artisans and cultural practitioners.

The Conference Welcome Reception was held on Thursday, May 23, after our first day of plenaries at the Public Red Akasaka. As always, the Welcome Reception is designed as a networking event open for all registered delegates to attend, and the Public Red was packed with delegates eager to discuss their thoughts on the conference's premier talks, and meet new friends and old colleagues.

The Conference Dinner concluded the second day of plenaries on the evening of Friday, May 24 at Shunju Tameike Sanno in Tokyo's midtown, a venue we have partnered with the previous March for ACEID/ACP/AGen2024. The dinner provided a more relaxed space for keynote speakers, presenters, and delegates to sit down together and rekindle topics introduced and discussed during 'The Forum', a new forum-style discussion panel introduced in May's conference programme, over a course meal. The second day of plenaries provided more interactive presentations such as The Forum and the Haiku Workshop, resulting in groups already established during those events to join together at tables to continue conversations and musings from earlier in the day.

The conference had two separate cultural events interwoven within its itinerary: a Haiku Workshop with haiku instructors Hana Fujimoto and Emiko Miyashita on Friday, May 24, and a Kimono Dressing Demonstration with kimono instructor Satoko Yamada on Saturday, May 25. Delegates, who are more often than not educators themselves, were invited to participate as students of traditional Japanese culture, diving hands-first into the art of haiku poetry by composing and gracing the IAFOR stage to share their own writings in the renowned style. The Kimono Dressing Demonstration provided an insightful and thorough look into the history, rules, and intricacies of kimono, a traditional Japanese form of dress, for both men's and women's wear in a gala style. The audience was engaged and able to pose questions during the live demonstration. IAFOR is humbled to have made connections with locally-renowned instructors who are happy in turn to share their craft with us, as their contributions aid us in creating a well-rounded programme itinerary for delegates to present their research, share ideas, and learn together.





Name: MURY
Affiliation: UPI
Country: INDONESIA



Appendix

Transcripts from *The Forum* discussion, divided by questions:

1. What is a Global Citizen?

'When it comes to the survey results, most of the things people mentioned are aspirational... but for a lot of people, Global Citizenship is an unavoidable reality that they have to deal with. There are lots of people who have dual nationality... or who have to go abroad for family or work purposes. For some people, being a global citizen is not something they can opt out of...'

– a delegate from the United Kingdom

'You can see cosmopolitanism as an elitist thing, but also as a grounds-up, inside-out [thing], whereas globalisation is top-down, outside-in. I see cosmopolitanism as a thing that comes from education and also from the individual, whereas globalisation is something that is forced upon us, whether we want it or not.'

– a delegate from Finland

'Citizenship is a relational concept. You cannot be a citizen all by yourself... You have to have an idea of what the globe is. Even if you are not educated in a cosmopolitan way, you have an innate capacity to feel that you are part of the world.'

– a delegate from The Philippines

2. What are (three) attributes of responsible global citizenship?

'The most important thing is the relationship between [people]. We must build the relationship first, [then we can proceed to the next step]. I come from China. In Chinese philosophy we have an important concept of rēn [Chinese: 仁], which means that the relationship between two people is to love each other. Based on this relationship, we can move forward.'

– a delegate from China

'Having good and moral ethics is essential. Everyone should be disciplined and understand other people's differences and accept them [as they are].'

– a delegate from Mongolia

'Making a conscious effort in dealing with prejudice. All of us grew up in a society with a certain type of information. Today, the world is sharply divided between the Global South and the Global North. I am from the Global South. Anybody who sees me automatically has some attitude [towards me]: 'oh that's someone from that poor region'. How we prepare our own minds to face such kinds of information... and how we nullify them... to see the world from a practical point of view, should be the way to go.'

– a delegate from Ghana

'I work with Indigenous people in the United States, and their way of thinking about relations and kinship is very cosmopolitan, but it's not included in the notion of 'cosmopolitanism'.'

– a delegate from Japan

Technology and AI, the satellite communications, [follow] their own developments. We, as humans, need to have more of a sense of humanity, so that this technology will not affect our sense of [relating] to each other...'

– a delegate from Indonesia

'Global Citizenship does not necessarily mean 'nationless'. We are still part of a nation, but [at the same time, we are part of another global nation].'

– a delegate from Japan

'I struggle with the notion of 'global citizenship' - it is the 'citizenship' part that bothers me because it has very particular connotations. I wonder, also, whether in order to get away from the 'globalisation' aspect that can be problematic to many, it would make sense to think of something like 'globalism' as a mindset. Yes, we have nations and countries, but climate change teaches us this lesson very well: one nation cannot fix its own climate... [in the same sense,] you can't fix your own poverty, because other nations will get poorer, then they will migrate to yours and cause chaos. And just like that, you can't fix your own security. This to me is global citizenship. Every big problem is everybody's problem.'

– a delegate from Italy

'Global citizenship is not only about the open-mindedness of people or their responsibilities. It's more about empathy: [having empathy towards people from another country]. When you have conflict that can potentially lead to war, for example, you can send even a small message and spread positivity in the name of humanity, because we live in a world of globalisation.'

– a delegate from Indonesia

"Global citizenship means participation, decision-making, obligations. We should be able to participate, which means voting. We have a global mindset and a thousand things that we want for Earth. But you are not a global citizen [unless you act upon those wishes and visions]. There has to be voting, and there has to be acting - it's not only being.'

– a delegate from The Philippines

3. What are some threats to exercising global citizenship?

'I am from an area in the United Kingdom, which is known for having particularly socially conservative political views. It would be wrong to say that people from there are inherently bad people or that they inherently don't care about things that are happening in the world. They come from a perspective of [not having] interacted much with people from the outside, or that they have been told off by policy-making elites and academics for saying things that would be considered not appropriate. Among policy-makers and academics, the argument for global citizenship is considered already won, but among a lot of members of the populace, the argument hasn't even been made yet. I feel like a lot of people feel left behind and that global citizenship is an elitist concept. We have to find ways to overcome that before it can be widely adopted.'

– a delegate from United Kingdom

'I think global citizenship is happening within a more general debate now around what we call 'de-globalisation' and 'de-risking', whereby countries move [away] from one another. COVID-19 has been a big [driver of] de-globalisation. Countries are trying to get more control over their supply chains and pharmaceuticals. I think people are starting to question [global citizenship] as the world tends to de-globalise and de-risk.'

– a delegate from the United Kingdom

4. What do you do in your classrooms/fields to further Global Citizenship?

'As an educator, I don't feel that I am supported in showing my contribution to society. On campus, we are required to do our research, but the indicator for success is a Scopus-indexed journal. Sometimes the importance or the benefit for society is denied [by those journals]. It's stressful. The government, or anyone who has the authority, must care, especially in Indonesia. The indicator for the development of the society is no longer [the benefit from research], but an indexed journal. It would be better to collaborate, via this Forum, for example.'

– a delegate from Indonesia

'Perhaps this is a bit controversial, but I think 'Global Citizenship' is not a good way to start this conversation. The term 'Global Citizenship' can be quite off-putting to a lot of people. Teaching from a phenomenon-based approach or from the perspective of the individual issues over time has the effect of creating a sense of global citizenship, even if we don't name it as such. So, I think, global citizenship as a concept is best reserved for academics outside of the actual practitioner side of things.'

– a delegate from the United Kingdom

'The concept of 'global citizenship' [in the classroom] seems a bit too much. I have been trying to push and motivate my students to understand that they are part of this global world. Indonesia is a quite left-behind country. My university especially is not trying hard to be part of a global or international campus. So, I have been trying to create a community among my students and encourage them to join international conferences like this. For [this ACAH/ACCS/ACSS conference], I actually applied with my students, but due to financial constraints, I was the only one who received a sponsorship to attend. But last March, I managed to get my students to the Istanbul Youth Summit in Turkey, [where they won the gold medal for best research]. So, I believe that the educator has a really important role to encourage their students to collaborate and become global citizens by going out into the world.'

– a delegate from Indonesia

'What we do in our classrooms to foster a global identity is that we teach our students to think and act locally, nationally, internationally, and globally. We also expose them to fieldwork and field trips. I also teach my students Ethnicity and Peace Studies. I teach them about the Holocaust, the Myanmar issue with the Rohingya, issues with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims, etc.'

– a delegate from The Philippines

'I am interested in the notion of 'interconnectedness' and how our lives are entangled with each other. We often use this word without knowing what it means. So, in the classroom, I try to ask my students to think about how their life is interconnected with those who are not in the United States. We can do that with many different things: things we use, things we eat, or how my peaceful life is related to a war somewhere else.'

– a delegate from United States

'We all are educators here, and we talk about how we are going to teach our students what we are going to demonstrate to them. But, what we do as lecturers matters a lot, not what we say. I was shocked by an experience I had yesterday. I asked a lady for directions, and the first thing she did when she saw me was to clutch her bag. Me, going to my classroom to teach my students how to be global citizens, and [meanwhile] reacting to someone else negatively, matters a lot. I think we should start with 'what do WE do as global citizens' before we go out there to teach our students how to be global citizens. If we cannot accept ourselves or deal with our feelings towards each other, whatever we say out there does not make any sense.'

– a delegate from South Africa

'When we talk about the classroom or education, we have to look at what level. At the highest, tertiary educational level, professors and lecturers have the freedom to design their own curriculum. However, at the basic level, the elementary or junior high school level, sometimes the contents of the curriculum are highly regulated by politicians. What the state wants future citizens to know is probably sealed there. The teacher at that level may not have the freedom to teach just anything. [But there are alternative ways to bypass this issue.] I work at an English school, and I am trying to integrate SDGs into an English conversation curriculum. Even parents are interested in these programmes, and they realise how their work [relates to SDGs and the world]. Integrating modern problems into an English conversation curriculum [is an option]. So, educators have an important role to play, but sometimes the limitation is how much freedom they have to teach what they want.'

– a delegate from Japan

'I've been developing global citizenship programmes for years now. It is becoming such an overused concept. It is what I call global-citizenship-washing (like green-washing), because many programmes are developed for the sake of labelling global citizenship and SDGs. We did surveys, and students replied 'oh I just finished this module, I'm done, check. I did my part of sustainability'. We have been working more on not the knowing about global citizenship, but on the identity-building first. Identity should be going first, because the students claim that global issues are so far away from their experience, mostly in more developed countries, that for them it's like 'if it doesn't bother me, why should I care?' This is a common trend in Europe. Another issue I want to raise is about sustainability. Sustainability is a big global citizenship concept that has been overused and misused. We forget to look at communities that for ages have been working on sustainability. It looks like we are reinventing the wheel, but sustainability is there already, actually. We forget to look at communities that are really practising it.'

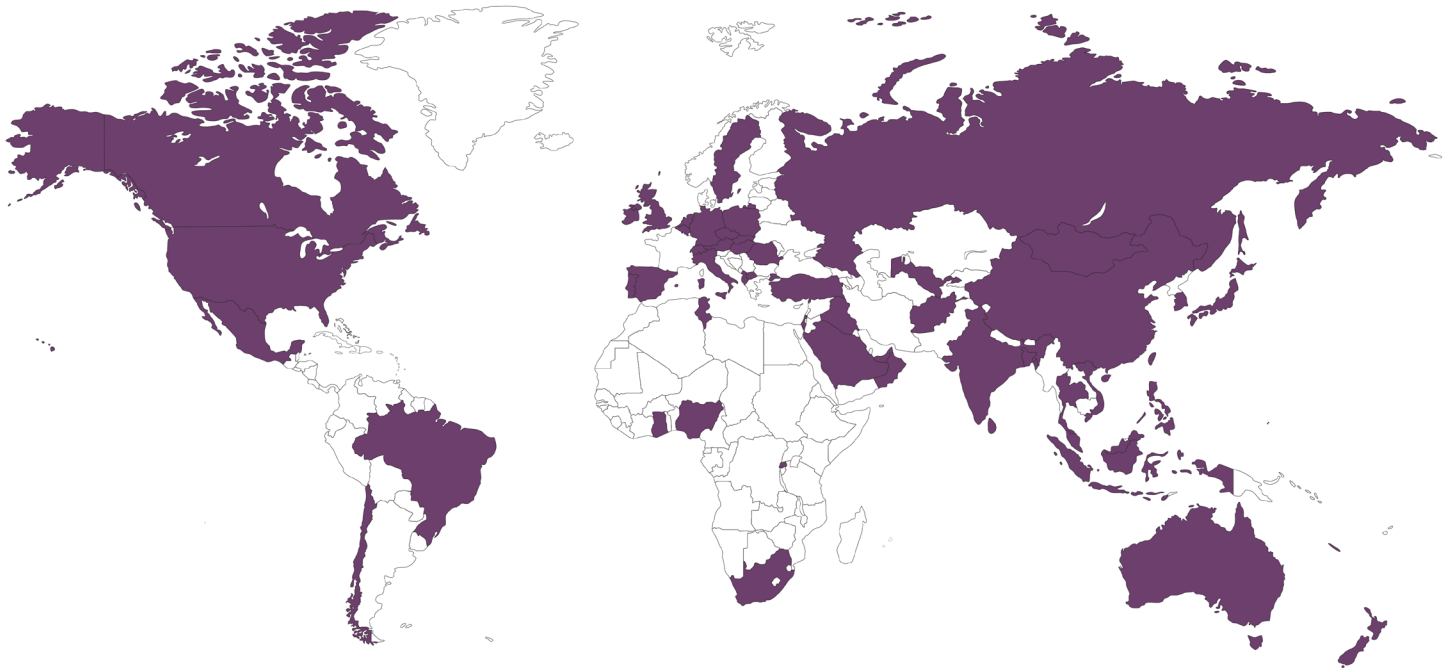
– a delegate from The Netherlands

ACAH/ACCS/ACSS2024 Key Statistics

Date of creation: Apr 19, 2024

international
intercultural
interdisciplinary

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international intercultural interdisciplinary

One of the greatest strengths of IAFOR's international conference is their international and intercultural diversity.

ACAH/ACCS/ACSS2024 has attracted 550+ delegates from 59 countries

Taiwan	72	Spain	7	Brazil	2	Macedonia	1
United States	54	South Africa	6	Ghana	2	Malta	1
Indonesia	52	Turkey	5	Macau	2	Mongolia	1
Japan	41	Vietnam	5	Mexico	2	New Caledonia	1
India	39	Germany	4	New Zealand	2	Oman	1
Philippines	34	Israel	4	Rwanda	2	Poland	1
Thailand	34	Portugal	4	Slovakia	2	Romania	1
Hong Kong	25	Czech Republic	3	Afghanistan	1	Russia	1
China	22	Ireland	3	Albania	1	Sweden	1
United Kingdom	21	Italy	3	Austria	1	Tunisia	1
Singapore	15	Netherlands	3	Belgium	1	Uzbekistan	1
South Korea	12	Nigeria	3	Brunei	1		
Australia	10	Saudi Arabia	3	Chile	1	Total Delegates:	554
Canada	10	Sri Lanka	3	Guam	1	Total Onsite Presentations:	366
Malaysia	10	Switzerland	3	Hungary	1	Total Online Presentations:	134
United Arab Emirates	8	Bangladesh	2	Iraq	1	Total Countries:	59

ACAH/ACCS/ACSS2024 Key Statistics

international
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interdisciplinary

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Date of creation: Apr 19, 2024

554 DELEGATES FROM 59 COUNTRIES



366

Onsite
Presentations



134

Online
Presentations

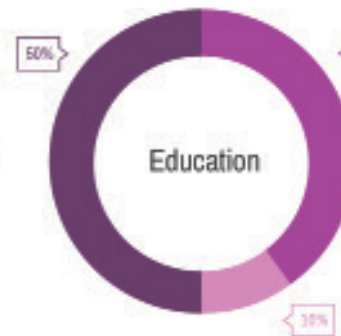


358

Institutions and
Organisations



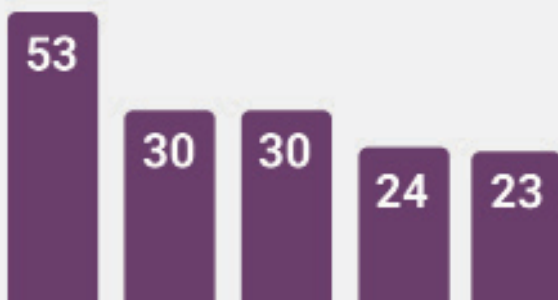
50% University Faculty
28% Doctoral Student
11% Postgraduate Student
4% Other
3% Postdoctoral Fellow/Instructor
3% Public Sector/Practitioner
2% Independent Scholar
1% Private Sector



50% Doctoral Degree
40% Masters Degree
10% Bachelors Degree

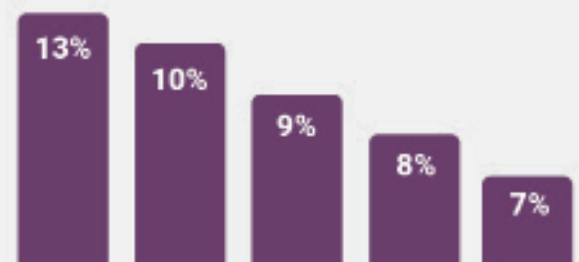
1. Teaching and Learning (53)
2. Cultural Studies (30)
3. Education and Social Welfare (30)
4. Literature/Literary Studies (24)
5. Psychology & Social Psychology (23)

Top Five Streams



1. Taiwan (13%)
2. United States (10%)
3. Indonesia (9%)
4. Japan (8%)
5. India (7%)

Top Five Countries of Delegates



502

Total
Presentations



224

Hours of
Content

Multiple Authored vs. Single Authored Submissions

60%

40%

international | intercultural | interdisciplinary

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Welcome

and Recognition

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Conference Photographs

















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