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Conference Report and Intelligence Briefing

The 16th Asian Conference on Education (ACE2024)

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Executive Summary

The 16th Asian Conference on Education (ACE2024) took place in Tokyo, Japan from November 25-29, 2024 and attracted a total of 710 people from 47 countries. The conference was held in partnership with the IAFOR Research Centre at the Osaka School of International Public Policy (OSIPP) at Osaka University, Japan. A key theme that emerged during the conference was 'community', a theme that links well with IAFOR's four designated Conference Themes for 2025-2029 programming. Whether discussed through the themes of **Humanity & Human Intelligence**, **Technology & Artificial Intelligence**, **Global Citizenship and Education for Peace**, or **Leadership**, communities remain an ever-present thread, serving as case studies and even modes of methodology in research within these fields today.

Communities are the backbone of society. The groups we belong to and are active in can be essential for our physical or emotional survival. This is why it is important to keep our communities as physically and mentally healthy as possible, so that the well-being of community members – and of society as a whole – can be guaranteed. Keynotes and panels at ACE2024 highlighted ways in which we can create and protect healthy communities, whether those are location-specific, and/or academic, political, and cultural in nature.

Education plays a central role in fostering collaborative environments within and between communities and serving those in need. In her keynote presentation, Professor Laura Bronstein of Binghamton University, United States, highlighted how her institution empowers local communities through University-Assisted Community Schools (UACS), which connect schools with social services to address challenges students face in and outside of the classroom, like hunger, homelessness, and academic success. She emphasised the varying global perspectives to community schools and advocated for knowledge-sharing among higher education institutions to expand access and improve student outcomes (Section 2.1.).

However, educational institutions need to recognise their social responsibility and reevaluate their goals to avoid becoming 'ivory towers', as warned by Professor Bronstein. At the ACE2024 Forum discussion, delegates came together to discuss topics universities should address regarding local realities, the presence of community-engaged courses in their institutions, and the evolving role of academia in society and the local communities in which they operate. Responses highlighted the need for discussions on AI, adult learning, and cultural preservation, while delegates also shared examples of community-based education, emphasising the academy's responsibility to prepare students for the future while fostering social change (Section 2.2.).

Culture and the Arts are another way through which we can indirectly discuss challenging topics that threaten to destroy the fabric that holds communities together, without coming across as condescending, hierarchical, or violent. Through their individual case studies, IAFOR Global Fellows Mr Hongmin Ahn of the Inter-University Center for Japanese Studies, Japan, and Dr Yanhua Zhou of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, China, made a strong case for the potential of community-engaged education in crossing divides and empowering the most vulnerable segments of society. The panel offered a timely reflection on the role of community-engaged art and education in addressing global challenges related to cultural preservation and social transformation (Section 3).

With recent changes brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic and the proliferation of AI, education, culture, and the arts may be seen as under attack and unable to assist communities. While the pandemic and AI posed challenges, we should also recognise the opportunities they brought. For example, in the panel presentation led by Dr Murielle El Hajj Nahas of Lusail University, Qatar, Dr Leandro Loyola of De La Salle University, Philippines, and Dr Ya-Ling Wang of National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan, explained how blended learning, a product of the COVID-19 pandemic, was highlighted as one such opportunity. Blended learning bridges online and in-person education, fostering flexibility, digital literacy, and collaboration across different age groups and cultural backgrounds. The panel discussion highlighted the method's growing relevance, emphasising the need for technological readiness, interactive teaching strategies, and AI integration to enhance engagement and learning outcomes (Section 4).

In contrast, the proliferation of AI and its potential to rapidly disseminate disinformation presents pitfalls we should avoid. In his workshop presentation, Professor Keith W. Miller of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, United States, discussed the characteristics of disinformation and how it spreads quickly, especially with the help of Generative AI, urging individuals and educators to combat it by practicing healthy skepticism and promoting trustworthy sources (Section 5).

Keynote presentation panels at ACE2024 explored different approaches to AI integration in the university classroom, for students and educators alike. One such panel, led by Ms Kylie Smith of the Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand, Professor Karin Avnit of the Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore, Dr Fiona Westbrook of the Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, and moderated by Ms Susie Kung of the Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand, discussed the challenges and strategies of integrating AI in higher education, highlighting the importance of clear, transparent policies, equitable access, and fostering AI literacy to promote responsible and critical use of AI among students and educators (Section 6.1). On the other hand, a separate panel led by Dr Héctor G. Ceballos of Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico, Dr Kenneth Lo of the Singapore University of Technology and Design, Singapore, Mr Danny Bielik of the Digital Education Council, Singapore, and moderator Dr Sean McMinn of The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, discussed the challenges of integrating AI into education, emphasising the need for comprehensive policies and AI literacy for both students and educators. They also stressed that AI is not a threat but a tool that can enhance teaching and learning when used responsibly (Section 6.3).

The discussions at ACE2024 concluded that it is high time for educational institutions to reflect on their identity and their future direction. We need to rethink how we educate future generations through community involvement, how we address global challenges related to cultural preservation and social transformation, and how we can shape the integration of new, profound tools like Generative AI into the classroom with ethics and care.

The conference also offered capacity-building and cultural workshops for delegates to develop professional skills. ACE2024 featured workshops on how to write a successful grant application, what academic skills to develop for a successful academic career, and new methodologies in ethnographic research. The conference also offered ample networking opportunities during the Welcome Reception and the Conference Dinner.

1. Introduction

As declared by UNESCO, 'Humans as a species evolved to be social'. Our well-being depends on effectively communicating our needs with each other and maintaining peaceful interpersonal relationships. Keynote speakers and panellists at The 16th Asian Conference on Education (ACE2024) supported this idea, underscoring humans' ability to form communities that respond to humanity's most challenging issues. Whether those communities are academic, religious, political, or location-specific, every human belongs to at least one of them and identifies themselves with their fellow community members. Various issues are, however, compromising the health of our communities: from political and religious disparities to climate change and technological disruption caused by AI; intra- and inter-community rivalries rooted in fear and uncertainty threaten collective action, harmony, and well-being among people worldwide.

The essentiality of being part of a group raises questions of belonging, such as belonging to 'what' and belonging 'well'. Controversial issues such as politics and religion are often not discussed open ly so as to preserve peace and harmony within society. This restriction undermines healthy communication and well-being and fosters a hostile environment of exclusion and marginalisation. Ignoring individual voices cannot be the way to preserve an illusion of peace.

IAFOR Chairman & CEO Dr Joseph Haldane (left) delivered the Welcome Address at ACE2024

The ACE2024 conference highlighted ways in which people, as part of their communities, can engage in difficult discussions and help each other without compromising harmony within and between their communities. Education is of primary importance in maintaining the well-being of communities, with institutions of higher education capitalising on their ability to innovate, respond more swiftly than national or local governments, mobilise resources, and match communities' demands with material, technological, and information supply. Culture and the Arts promoted through education are also seen as conducive to bridging divides and creating neutral spaces for dialogue and reconciliation. These views are consistent with talks at other IAFOR conferences throughout 2024, which also highlighted the importance of innovating human communication and cooperation.

Even though educational institutions are physically embedded within local communities, many institutions today face the risk of turning into ivory towers – secluded, privileged spaces that avoid local issues intimately felt by the community beyond its walls with an escapist attitude. The relationship between these two communities is often referred to as 'town and gowns', a term that originates from the visual distinction between scholars who traditionally wore gowns and local residents outside of the academic community. Discussions around poverty, migration, climate change, or AI often do not travel beyond the classroom, risking universities becoming ideological and tone-deaf echo chambers. How to reconcile the so-called 'towns and gowns' separation of the academy and the communities next door and foster a sense of shared responsibility between higher educational institutions and the local community can be key to healthier communities.

The keynote and panel presentations at the ACE2024 conference in Tokyo urged us to rethink the role of the academy and its disconnect from the communities in which they conduct and house research. Presentations called for higher education institutions to reconnect with said communities, promote community-engaged education and art, and readdress global challenges related to cultural preservation and social transformation.

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2. The Academy and Local Communities

Youth today suffer from issues that are severely affecting their opportunities for quality education, such as food insecurity, mental health, teacher shortages, absenteeism, and economic inequality. In her keynote speech titled 'University-Assisted Community Schools: An Interdisciplinary, International Movement to Promote Equity and Transform Education', Professor Laura Bronstein of Binghamton University, United States, shared that in the US alone, one in four children are forced to skip school, every fifth student suffers from mental health issues, and 10.5% of students face food insecurity. Higher education institutions have time and time again shown great potential in raising awareness of these issues, mobilising resources and exchanging information in an attempt to address them. This was evidently proven during the Forum discussion at ACE2024, where delegates shared how their respective institutions are actively collaborating with local communities to better assist students in these situations. However, even though embedded within local realities, many universities today face the risk of turning into ivory towers – secluding research and subsequent results that could directly impact the students they study, keeping them inside the privileged spaces of academia. How to reconcile the so-called 'towns and gowns' separation of the academy and the communities next door, and foster a sense of shared responsibility between higher educational institutions and the local community, can be the key to bridging the two communities and empowering people and education alike.

2.1. Universities and Community Schools

In her keynote speech, Professor Bronstein introduced how her institution is empowering the local community, offering insights into how education can transform local realities for the better. Every child wants to be happy and well-fed, and according to Professor Bronstein, 'community schools are the best shot we have at making this happen for children'. This is because educators in schools are often not trained to deal with issues outside of the classroom such as sickness, homelessness, and hunger, with the assumption that there are external professionals and community members at large who are better equipped to deal with these real-life challenges, she explained. University-Assisted Community Schools (UACS) use these local resources, including people who want to volunteer for their community within schools, in order to fill in the gap that educators and administrators are unable to fill.

UACS are not institutions that give out money; rather, they are institutions that connect schools with social services to improve academic success. 'A community school is a strategy that begins with a needs assessment and leads to a targeted, integrated focus on academics, services, supports, and opportunities to improve student learning, and strengthen families and communities', Professor Bronstein explained. UACS activities at Binghamton University, for example, include an NSF Archaeology Afterschool Programme, which aids students with supplementary activities that can help them address climate anxiety, particularly in high schoolers; expands arts programmes in local schools, and conducts physics camps for grandparents and their grandchildren, extending into and incorporating community members within the students' families. Professor Bronstein noted how these activities have shown positive effects for students such as increased graduation rates, increased literacy levels, improved school safety, and an improved student-teacher relationship, while teachers themselves are able to focus more on education.

UACS also have the advantage of developing individual curricula that are aligned with each community's – and even each country's – needs. Communities around the world face various issues to a different degree, depending on their location. Global perspectives on community schools are, therefore, varying based on region, Professor Bronstein explained while outlining the foci of each region's community schools. For example, Western Europe follows a similar framework of community school education as the United States, with many rural schools naturally becoming community schools. On the other hand, Eastern and Central Europe focuses more on community integration and inclusion, as they receive a large number of immigrants, particularly from different religious backgrounds. In Canada, the focus is more on supporting Indigenous populations, in turn promoting inclusion. India focuses on providing basic needs, such as food, to increase school attendance, especially among girls, while Cuba promotes civic engagement.

Despite the divergence of global perspectives on community schools, there is a lot of merit in knowledge sharing and outreach, said Professor Bronstein. Given that UACS have been such a positive influence at Binghamton University, she urged other institutions to 'share the UACS model with local institutions of higher education for ways their faculty, staff, and students can work collaboratively with local schools and communities to expand access and success'. This knowledge exchange is exactly what delegates did during the Forum session outlined in the next section, which Professor Bronstein also moderated. She acknowledged that higher education institutions must reflect on their current identity as well as their future direction to avoid becoming isolated ivory towers: 'Who are we now and who should we be moving forward?'.

Above: A delegate expresses their thoughts on the topic of Global Citizenship in Local Communities and the Academy aduring The Forum.

Watch on YouTube
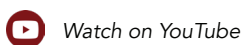
2.2. Local Realities and the Role of Education: Perspectives from the IAFOR Community

As part of IAFOR's ongoing discourse around the theme of Global Citizenship, and to align itself with the main theme of ACE2024, The Forum, an hour-long directed discussion among delegates, framed the discussion in Tokyo around the topic of 'Global Citizenship in Local Communities and the Academy'. In an effort to reimagine academia's role and resituate it along the communities it is asked to serve, IAFOR invited delegates to converse about community-assisted education, the university's role within the local community, and how local communities and the academy can work together to make a difference in the world.

At a previous Forum session in London, participants had argued that students would hardly care about global issues if they remained disconnected from their own local communities. Further discussion had participants agreeing that this lack of attachment to the local community desensitises people to the plight of others, especially when one feels little sense of belonging themselves. Off-campus experiences, such as service learning, can improve students' capacity for empathy towards other people's suffering and get them in touch with local issues. One delegate posited that empathy was a skill that could be learnt and concluded that 'once they learn empathy, they can imagine other people's suffering. So, citizenship first, and then global citizenship'. Bridging the gap between the local and global world could be key to fostering conscious global citizens.

Educators have identified this issue and tackled it from various angles inside and outside the classroom, developing community-assisted curricula and sensitising their students to their communities' needs. At this Forum discussion, delegates shared not only what their institutions are teaching in terms of community service, but also their thoughts on what the academy's role is and what it needs to consider more going forward.

As moderators of the Forum, Professor Bronstein and IAFOR's Academic Operations Manager, Dr Melina Neophytou, provided interactive questions and polls for delegates to engage and share their ideas with each other. The first question posed to the delegates was 'What topics should universities discuss more regarding local realities?'. The WordCloud-style question collected keywords such as culture, equity, diversity, community services, (AI) ethics, the use of AI, reading, environment/climate change/sustainability, character building, resilience, critical thinking, internationalisation, inequality/uplifting those in need, and new jobs/industry needs. Asked to elaborate on some of their answers, delegates advocated for more discussion around adult learning, AI, the future of jobs, and preserving local cultures in the face of globalisation.

According to one delegate, part of local reality is not just the community contacts but also their age and the experience of older students. This has profound implications for knowledge sharing and community service implementation:

> " *[The academy should talk more about] adult learning and how it impacts student learning. Sometimes the adult learners have been in a profession for 30-40 years, but the students that are coming our way are already very advanced. The only way we can parallel their speed of learning is that we learn from each other. This is a reality that we witness even in this room. We can share knowledge, and then we can expedite servicing many of these areas.*

- A delegate from the United States

Below: Professor Laura Bronstein moderated The Forum session alongside IAFOR's Dr Melina Neophytou.

AI was another hot topic that sparked discussion among delegates who had opposing views about which aspect of this innovative technology to focus on. The discussion witnessed the ever-present philosophical dilemma of whether to focus on utilitarianism or the intrinsic values of an action:

> *AI is changing a lot of things. How does AI change the local community and culture? Are we doing things with our own effort or are we relying on machines? This obviously has a lot of impact on the brain's chemistry and how we see ourselves and the people around us. While walking out in the streets of Tokyo, I noticed that many things have been automated. Because of this, we have lost a lot of human interaction. So how, in a world of AI, are we making our students more culturally oriented? How are we going to make our jobs relevant? And how are we going to contribute value to society?*
>
> *- A delegate from an undisclosed country*

Another delegate challenged the assertion by questioning what the focus of our discussions on AI should be:

> *I do not agree. We are in an era of teaching outcome-based education. We know we have to define the outcome. The most important thing now is to define the outcome in the era of AI, not how to use AI; what to teach and how to teach with AI, not simply the use of AI. We have to change our mindset about the impact of AI and focus on the outcome: what do we want students to do in this era?*
>
> *- A delegate from an undisclosed country*

Another delegate mentioned that the academy and local communities should approach cooperation in a more practical and logical way:

> *I agree that [the academy] needs to match local realities and conditions, but one of the other issues that we have here is on the supply side: what do we, as academics, have expertise in? What can we feasibly and practically do with our expertise and helping local communities? That's, of course, going to be much easier for some universities and some academics than it will be for others, depending on how their departmental makeups are. I think there needs to be some effort to find that Goldilocks zone between local needs and what expertise the universities have contained in them.*
>
> *- A delegate from the United Kingdom*

Below: Forum sessions use smartphones and QR codes to allow delegates to contribute to the conversation.
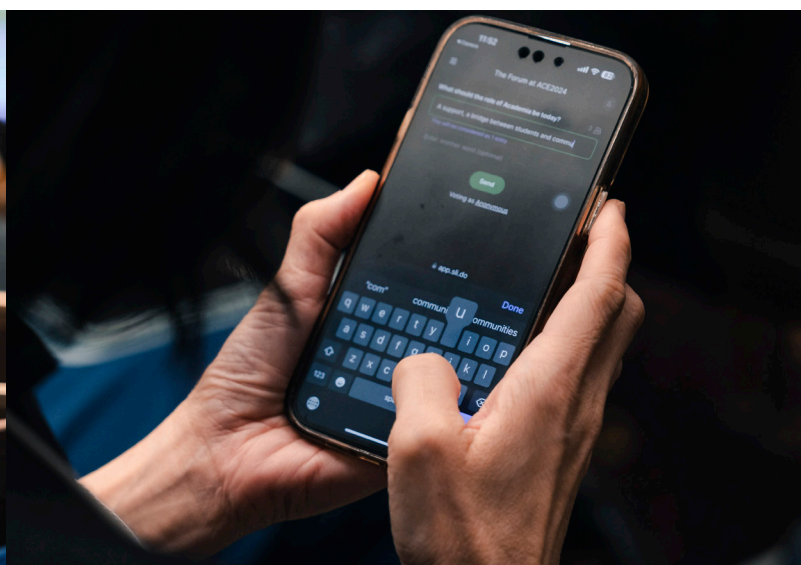
The second question asked delegates whether their current institutions offer any community-engaged courses. The majority of respondents answered positively (67%), while 23% said 'No' and 11% said that they teach them (or participate in them) informally. Asked to give examples of such curricula or courses at their institutions, delegates shared global perspectives in community-engaged education:

> *I am Italian but I teach in the San Francisco Bay area. At my college, community engagement programmes are actually part of the General Education curriculum. Every student at every school is supposed to take a minimum of one of these classes. I think this is pretty common in California.*
>
> *- A delegate from Italy, working in the United States*

> *In our community, some high schools include the programme of 'live in'. They send students to live with people in remote areas to experience how to live like them. In my department of psychology, undergraduate students engage with disabled people or get involved with sports development.*
>
> *- A delegate from Indonesia*

> *I work at JICA, and we do university outreach programmes. One of the programmes we deal with is a scholarship programme called the Abe Initiative which is intended to bring scholars from Africa to study here in Japan. A big objective of that programme is to try and integrate them into the local communities to foster understanding between their home country and Japan, and also to imbue them with customs of Japanese business practices… They would be encouraged to interact with the local communities: some of them offer tutoring to local students, or they take part in various cultural events.*
>
> *- A delegate from the United Kingdom, working in Japan*

Some delegates also shared challenges they are facing when attempting to teach or implement community-engaged curricula, touching upon issues of cultural differences, interpersonal relationships, and limited outreach:

> *I've been developing our Experiential Learning course for multinational exchange students. I think that for professors who have been developing these in the intercultural area, the challenging part is that creating opportunities for multicultural students to interact with the local community [requires] teaching common courtesy and what Japanese manners are. From the intercultural perspective, there are a lot of things that professors have to work on.*
>
> - A delegate from Japan

> *What I learned from community engagement is that sometimes, people knock on your door and you're so busy navigating the system that you forget the power that they have in keeping kids engaged and inspired. This year at our school, we had several universities reach out and say 'This year, we will help you do gardening, planting trees, and provide you with resources. All we need is time with your students.' Let me tell you, this has been one of the most inspiring things we have seen… Keep knocking on the door at your local school districts.*
>
> - A delegate from the United States

> *We heard a lot about formally putting community engagement into the curriculum. However, what I experienced was informally empowering students to go and do this community engagement themselves. I feel we really need to talk about interpersonal relationships in education, especially in the age of AI, where it seems we don't need to talk to a person anymore.*
>
> - A delegate from Singapore

Finally, when asked about the role of the academy today, participants typed in keywords such as 'preparing students for the future', 'forming humanised citizens', 'grooming future leaders', 'connecting the local with the global context', and 'serving the community'. More abstract answers included 'sparking societal change', being a 'torchbearer for social reforms', and being a 'home' and a 'lighthouse':

> *Academia should focus on dignity, empowerment, and solidarity. Those are the three pillars on which we should build. Dignity and empowerment are closely related to the individual achievements of students, giving them the talents and skills they need to rise up in life, whether that is from a position of poverty or just to improve their position more generally. Solidarity is a kind of guiding star we can use for dealing with community empowerment issues. Within that, I think it's important not to forget the individual as well. It is always going to be individuals who are able to pursue programmes that are not directly related to the health of that community.*
>
> *- A delegate from the United Kingdom*

> *Why did I choose to be a teacher in the first place? Because I want to share, I want to serve the community by providing the community with competent workers. And why do students choose to go to a tertiary institution? Because they can become productive citizens. However, there is an interest divergence. Over time, teachers cease to prioritise teaching. They look for a new interest and a new personal goal. Students, under the influence of social pressure, [also start looking] for a different interest. We have to look back and look at the community service aspect. Universities need to be a lighthouse and help students decide on an altruistic goal by cultivating an altruistic interest from the very beginning.*
>
> *- A delegate from Vietnam*

The varying opinions shared during this Forum discussion are a testament to how tailored community-engaged education can and needs to be to each locality. Despite different perspectives on what curricula should look like, one constant seems to be the importance of community service and the potential of higher education institutions to lead the way. If there is one point all participants agreed upon, it is that community-engaged education is necessary and effective in fostering global citizenship and ensuring the well-being of students, teachers, and communities worldwide.

Watch on YouTube
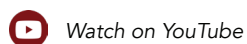
3. Discussing Religion and Migration

'Religion and politics are often not discussed at the dinner table if you want to keep the peace', stated Dr Joseph Haldane, Chairman and CEO of IAFOR. Diverse backgrounds are often the cause of misunderstandings, as it is difficult to imagine and understand another person's views, values, and life experiences. For example, as Dr Haldane reminded the audience, the Japanese constitution is one that keeps things secular to avoid strong political debates and conflict. However, peaceful coexistence requires more than simply avoiding difficult discussions. It is possible to discuss difficult topics such as religion and politics through other channels, such as culture and art, as several keynote speakers at various IAFOR conferences have expressed (see Hall & Ansaldo: ACAH/ACCS/ACSS2024; García-Osuna, Hall & Raina: ECE/ECAH/ECLL/EGen2024; Offord: BCE/BAMC2024; Fortes-Guerrero: BCE/BAMC2024).

How can education and religion coexist? What is the role of community art and how does it interact with a highly politicised topic like migrants? These were questions that two IAFOR Global Fellows addressed in a panel titled 'Community Engagement and Education in East Asia: From Preservations of Cultural Heritage to Practices of Contemporary Art'. Moderated by Dr Haldane, the panel was composed of two IAFOR Global Fellows, Mr Hongmin Ahn of the Inter-University Center for Japanese Studies, Japan, and Dr Yanhua Zhou of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, China, and looked at how we educate future generations through arts-based community education in East Asia.

The panel's focus on challenging topics such as cultural heritage, religion, and migration is in line with the IAFOR Global Fellowship Programme and its 2024-25 theme of 'Independent Voices', which looks to foster a global community of independent and marginalised voices, with fellows from different cultural, religious, and political backgrounds coming together to discuss challenging topics within a safe space. Thereby, IAFOR seeks to create ways in which to promote dialogue and intercultural understanding through interdisciplinarity, a point which was also made during the panel discussion.

3.1. The Cultural Transformation of Religion

In his talk titled 'The Shikoku Pilgrimage and its Ambivalence in Local Education', Mr Ahn focused on the ongoing tradition, practise, and preservation of the Shikoku Pilgrimage in Japan, demonstrating how regional and national educational programmes advance cultural preservation and promote local pride while supporting Japan's UNESCO heritage recognition efforts. In this way, he argued that controversial subjects such as religious education can be taught in schools through a cultural heritage lens, taking the emphasis away from what can be seen as advancing political ideologies.

Shikoku, one of Japan's main four islands, is renowned for its pilgrimage culture, which stems from an influential Buddhist history in the region. Its cultural significance is so important that UNESCO promoted the region's status of 'pilgrimage culture' to world heritage. According to Mr Ahn, the pilgrimage serves as a unifying force across Shikoku's four prefectures, as it aids in the development of the region through tourism, which, in turn, assists in countering Asian depopulation that is currently observed in Japan. In terms of community building and service, the Shikoku pilgrimage practise engages in activities that offer food, shelter, and assistance to communities, reflecting Japanese values of hospitality and community.

In modern Japan, the notion of pilgrimage has been rebranded into one understood to promote tourism, preserve cultural heritage, be of academic interest, and as a retirement activity. In fact, 'pilgrimage in contemporary Japan does not require pilgrims to be faithful', Mr Ahn said. He explained that in order to counter possible backlash of religious favouritism, both the media and the government have capitalised on the pilgrimage's cultural heritage as a way to indirectly promote Buddhism. In the media, Shilkoku's pilgrimage is represented as a window into traditional Japanese culture, promoting a way to encounter the *Kokoro no Furusato* ('the spiritual homeland'). It is an 'idealised mythology that stands in contrast to modern urban Japan', said Mr Ahn, which is a strong selling point for tourism in Japan.

This negotiation between cultural and religious elements is mirrored in Japanese education as well, Mr Ahn claimed. Within the official curriculum, the mention of the Shikoku pilgrimage is never in relation to religion, with educational programmes primarily framing the pilgrimage as cultural heritage. This is in alignment with the Japanese constitution's secular nature. However, there are strong sentiments regarding the inclusion of the Shikoku pilgrimage coming from those who see this as 'religious favouritism', Mr Ahn explained, and who argue that the government is indirectly promoting the Shikoku pilgrimage and Buddhism in particular. Mr Ahn concluded with a provocative question for the audience to ponder upon: 'How much religion is too much religion in education?'

3.2. Community Art and Migrants

Cultural heritage preservation is also important when seen in relation to social transformation. Migration is a global phenomenon: numerous migrant communities with rich cultural heritage are often marginalised and excluded when displaced, while discussions around this topic are highly politicised and, therefore, often avoided in East Asian cultures that favour social harmony. In her panel presentation titled **'Handshake 302 and the Art-Geographic Education in Migrants' Communities'**, Dr Zhou discussed a case study on the Handshake 302 art collective in Shenzhen, China, where art-geographic explorations serve as a means of engaging with migrant communities, resulting in the shaping of identity through contemporary art education.

Shenzhen is a city often celebrated as a symbol of China's rapid market-driven development, but behind the modern skyscrapers exist underdeveloped areas known as 'urban villages'. These underdeveloped areas are home to a significant population of migrant workers and low-income residents. The buildings in these areas are so narrowly built that 'residents can reach out their windows and shake hands with their neighbours', giving them the 'handshake buildings' moniker, Dr Zhou explained.

Migrants who live amid these poor living conditions are often overlooked. However, an art collective in Shenzhen is working to help migrants preserve their cultural heritage. The Handshake 302 art collective focuses on exploring the city and engaging with its residents through creative and collaborative initiatives. One notable project involves creating a map that highlights aspects of the area's human geography through city walks. Tourists and other local residents are, therefore, able to trace the everyday life of migrant workers, taking the same routes as them and seeing life through their eyes. The Handshake 302 art collective also organises lunches for single people and allows them to have conversations around housing costs, shared living spaces, and issues faced by migrants, including intimacy and raising children. These efforts allow marginalised segments of society such as migrants to share their challenges and build a sense of community.

Coining the term 'Art Geography', Dr Zhou referred to the art collective as a 'community-education effort at the intersection of art and geography', which helps 'shape the identity of migrants in Shenzhen and make this city understand itself through a series of art-geographic education'. As a relatively young city with no prior cultural heritage and with a huge segment of its population existing as a politically controversial societal element, Dr Zhou emphasised that Shenzhen's cultural significance is being shaped at this very moment. The art collective is an effort to empower and give meaning to migrant communities' lives by helping them become active agents of social transformation without politicising their existence.

Through their individual case studies, both Mr Ahn and Dr Zhou made a strong case for the potential of community-engaged education in crossing divides and empowering the most vulnerable segments of society. The panel ultimately called for a rethinking of how we educate future generations in East Asia through community involvement, offering a timely reflection on the role of community-engaged art and education in addressing global challenges related to cultural preservation and social transformation.

4. Blended Learning: Connecting Learning Communities

In the current digital age, the definition of 'community' has expanded to include connections that cross national and cultural borders. Online spaces and their communities, even though stripped of face-to-face communication, still function in similar ways to local communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these online communities proved to be resilient and overcame issues caused by physical lockdowns. In terms of education, blended learning was perceived as an important approach during the COVID-19 pandemic, but will it continue to be relevant? The panel presentation ['Blended Learning: Overcoming Challenges and Implementing Solutions'](#) by [Dr Murielle El Hajj Nahas](#) of [Lusail University](#), Qatar, [Dr Leandro Loyola](#) of [De La Salle University](#), Philippines, and [Dr Ya-Ling Wang](#) of [National Taiwan Normal University](#), Taiwan, showed the application of blended learning in a wider context and how it can stay relevant when face-to-face activities have returned. Blended learning combines the online and in-person learning elements, including material and activities to achieve specific learning outcomes. Using insights from the Canadian context, Dr Loyola highlighted the increasing trend of blended learning and its popularity among teachers and students alike. In short, blended learning classes give flexibility, accessibility, and equip students with digital literacy and essential skills for the 21st-century workforce. From Dr Loyola's perspective, the rise of blended learning in Canada is partly due to its readiness and effective online learning infrastructure that laid the strong foundation for blended learning. Dr Wang highlighted the importance of having the infrastructure in place and gave examples of how technological readiness contributes to successful collaborative classrooms between Taiwan and international partner institutions.
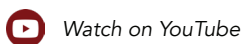
The success of blended learning relies on technological readiness and how instructors execute the class. The key to successful blended learning is to deliver interactive classes where physicality is absent. Being in different spaces creates a sense of disconnection, and oftentimes students on the online platform disengaged or were distracted from the class. Dr Nahas highlighted that balanced participation from online and in-person students can better connect students between platforms. For example, students were assigned a discussion topic, and students on both platforms were given equal opportunities to participate in the discussion. The online students were encouraged to turn on their cameras to make them feel connected with the physical classroom. In addition, Dr Wang presented another context of classrooms with intergenerational and intercultural students. In her research on intergenerational blended learning, the important elements that connect the different groups of students are ice-breaking activities and proficiency tests to ensure an inclusive learning experience. The class needs to be paced to adapt to the students' different cognitive and learning adaptations to maintain engagement and achieve desirable learning outcomes.

The panellists also suggested that blended learning helps facilitate equipping teachers and students with digital literacy. They are required to be engaged and familiarised with equipment, platforms, and other technologies that are applied during blended learning. Dr Wang highlighted the difference between student groups in handling learning technology, citing that older students are more prone to technological anxiety in older students than younger students. However, it is the opportunity to connect the two groups of students to collaborate and learn together and foster digital fluency. Moreover, AI plays an increasingly important role in managing blended classrooms. Dr Loyola stated that AI is beneficial in helping automate administrative tasks, providing personalised learning experiences, and creating material. However, it requires teachers to adapt to its fast development and keep in mind the ethical concerns and the reduction of personal interactions. He further encouraged the training and support for teachers to enhance their digital literacy in executing classrooms, such as how to deliver and incorporate technology in their courses.

The panel highlighted that blended learning has connected students across platforms, ages, nations, and cultural backgrounds, and continues to do so. It provides opportunities for students and teachers to engage with technology in education, promote collaborative learning, and practice effective communication, which are parts of the 21st-century toolkit of essential skills. These skills have the potential to strengthen the health of online communities, including active listening, intergenerational and intercultural understanding, and interpersonal skills when engaging in online communication.

Above: Professor Keith W. Miller of the University of Missouri-St. Louis presents a workshop on internet disinformation.

Watch on YouTube

5. 'Never Share Poison': Disinformation, the Internet, AI - And Our Community

In the age of the internet, disinformation is spreading far and wide, and with the help of Generative AI, creating disinformation has become cheaper, faster, and harder to distinguish. In the presentation 'Internet Disinformation, Epistemology, and Education: Meeting the Challenges of Massive Lying', Professor Keith W. Miller of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, United States, laid out the characteristics of disinformation dissemination and how the academy can contribute to society by combatting disinformation. In brief, disinformation is purposely falsified information. Disinformation travels fast and creates confusion and mistrust across groups in society. This pace is in stark contrast to the dissemination of truth, which takes time to establish and requires methodological approaches and evidence to be justified. Disinformation usually provokes anger, capturing internet users' attention and inciting emotional responses more easily than the truth. It provokes alarmed users to click on the link and become invested, even spreading it further themselves by sharing with friends across online platforms. These 'clickbaits' will increase in the degree of anger they incite and the number of clickbaits they reproduce, as it benefits the agenda of those who create and spread disinformation, and the earnings they make from online engagement. What is concerning is anger in disinformation often turns into hatred, pointed towards the powerless within the society and gives those who create disinformation power. What can we do to fight disinformation that affects not only us as the media consumer but also the wider community around us?

Professor Miller encouraged us to recognise our power as educators when confronting disinformation in the classroom and beyond. He presented four key points to consider when combatting disinformation:

1. 'Do not feel powerless.' We must realise our capacity to fight disinformation and highlight the actionable items that we can do.
2. Resist 'sharing the poison'. It is our first instinct to share the disinformation if it elicits an emotional response from us, which is natural. we encounter to either warn our community or report it to relevant agencies. However, we have just helped spread disinformation as soon as we shared it, regardless of the purpose we aimed to do.
3. 'Inoculate' ourselves and be on guard for disinformation. The most effective way to be inoculated is to practice 'healthy skepticism', that is, to 'strive for a golden mean between cynicism and gullibility'.
4. Information encountered on the internet should be 'considered guilty until proven innocent'. We should consider the sources of the information, amplify the trustworthy sources, and, most importantly, ask ourselves who benefits from this disinformation and what their motivation is.

With these key points in mind, what can we contribute to the wider society in terms of combating disinformation, whether as an educator to our students or as community members, online and offline? From educators to students, Professor Miller recommended the generation of a whitelist or a blacklist. A whitelist refers to a list of websites or sources of information that are allowed to be accessed, while all others are blocked. A blacklist works in reverse where websites and sources on the list are blocked, but all other sources that are not on the list are accessible. Professor Miller suggested that this method is the most practical way to manage the information our students or the people in our community consume on the internet. As a member of any community, we should hold the sources of disinformation accountable. For example, we should not vote for politicians who are sources of disinformation and should report it to their party, Professor Miller advised. Or, when we become aware that a website is spreading disinformation, we should not spend time on it as it gives them engagement and earnings, which influences their growth. If you are on social media and it seems to have many lies, quit the platform.

This workshop was not just another theorem of disinformation threats on the internet, but also a platform where the actual threats and solutions were discussed as lessons for educators. Professor Miller posed the question of how educators should deal with suspected disinformation brought to them by their students. Delegates in the audience were asked to consider the power relations between them and the students when coming up with the appropriate approach to address disinformation in the classroom. A delegate repeated Professor Miller's solution to amplify trustworthy sources. The delegate explained that during the recent outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, his students shared what he suspected was disinformation about ethnic division in Ukraine, disinformation the students sourced from the internet. Approaching the issue as a teacher, the delegate subsequently wrote a paper about the topic with proper citations from credible academic sources and distributed it to the students. In this teachable moment, students learned how to verify the information they received and its sources. The paper probed students to ask more questions on the topic, and the disinformation narrative became much less prevalent when more facts were known. As a member of any community and the role we play in it, this workshop equipped us with the capacity to inform our community about threats of disinformation and how to deal with them in this ever-evolving digital age.

Clockwise left-right: Mr Danny Bielik, Professor Sean McMinn, Dr Kenneth Lo, and Dr Héctor G. Ceballos.

▶ *Watch on YouTube*

6. AI is Not a Threat: AI as 'Technological Stepping Point' in Education

The ongoing discussion of AI in education often involves how educators deal with students' usage of AI. The rules and ethics of using AI imposed upon students by teachers or institutions are often the focal point. The panel presentation 'Navigating the Hype and Reality of Generative AI in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Emerging Trends' by Dr Héctor G. Ceballos of Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico, Dr Kenneth Lo of the Singapore University of Technology and Design, Singapore, Mr Danny Bielik of the Digital Education Council, Singapore, and moderated by Dr Sean McMinn of The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, expanded upon the discussion of AI in higher education, placing emphasis on the educator's approach to Generative AI in the classroom. The panellists are leaders of international alliances on AI and Education, and their alliances were founded based on common challenges, including how to apply AI in education. Mr Bielik stated that the Digital Education Council (DEC) was founded on the grounds that there has yet to be a common practical and outcome-focused policy on AI that addresses contemporary challenges, such as sustainability, workforce transformation, and new and emerging skill sets. To date, DEC has over 70 universities participating globally. As for the Cyber-Physical Learning Alliance (CPLA), Dr Lo stated that collaboration with institutions facing common challenges brings different expertise and experiences together. The CPLA's goals are to improve and maximise learning capacities by developing solutions, technologies, and pedagogies for the future of education. Both DEC and CPLA shared the same approach in addressing AI: the education field cannot escape from AI, so how can we harness it?
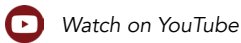
6.1. There Is No Perfect AI Policy

With the rapid development of Generative AI and other technologies and their range of applications across disciplines and contexts, it is a challenge to have universal guidelines or policies that suit all higher education institutions. The panel 'Navigating AI in Higher Education: Multiple Perspectives from Policy to Practice' by Ms Kylie Smith of the Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand, Professor Karin Avnit of the Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore, Dr Fiona Westbrook of the Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, and moderated by Ms Susie Kung of the Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand, presented comparative experiences of how contextual factors such as government policy, institutional practice, and principles affected the formation and implementation of AI policy at different institutions. From the Singaporean experience, Professor Avnit highlighted how the government's strong advocacy on education policy combined with the institution's principle to embrace AI with caution led to the implementation of a comprehensive and inclusive AI policy. The policy does not have overarching rules but instead follows principles, e.g., the responsibility remains with humans, focus on foundational skills for the development of higher-order thinking skills, and academic integrity and fairness should not be compromised. Faculty members and students communicate about what is required or expected from them for integrating AI into their classes, keeping in mind the quality of assessment, academic integrity, and how AI can be used to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

Policies can be a driving force, as well as an obstacle to integrating AI into education. Compared with the Singaporean experience, Ms Smith shared the challenges of having a broad AI policy in New Zealand. Without clear institutional guidelines or direction on whether to embrace or prevent the use of AI, it is challenging to determine the depth of implementation for faculty members and the scope of use for the students. The lack of timely preparation of a policy also hindered the integration and implementation of AI. Dr Westbrook addressed this lack of institutional force to realise the impact of AI in education led to slower progress and effectiveness in implementing AI policy at the institutional level. This held back opportunities for students to be equipped with the necessary skills to be work-ready when they graduate and led to comparatively slower professional development for faculty members.

Comprehensive guidelines, transparency, and communication on AI policy are the keys to enhancing students' AI literacy. Mr Bielik referenced recent research conducted on 4,000 students across 16 countries, which found that 75% of the surveyed students wished they had more training on the use of AI. They were concerned that they did not understand what AI is and did not feel well-prepared for careers that utilise AI in the workplace. This reflected the incomprehensiveness of existing policy on AI, which was, in many cases, not communicated well to the students. These policies on AI also need to be effectively communicated to relevant stakeholders beyond the universities, such as legislators, employers, parents, and prospective students. Dr Lo also stated that while AI training and literacy are important to gain new skill sets, it is equally important to communicate institutional AI policies beyond the university campus. Educators should look into what and how industries are using AI, and adjust the curriculum and teaching materials to match the required fundamental and evolving knowledge. In addition, Dr Ceballos highlighted the importance of training students to acknowledge and recognise AI's limitation in terms of its output and position it as one of the tools in the learning process, which will lead students to use AI responsibly.

6.2. Students and AI Literacy

More often than not, AI policy regarding students' use of AI is about setting boundaries for its use rather than how they can harness it. This led to the negative perception of AI among teachers and students, complicating the integration of AI into education and discouraging the ethical use of AI. Dr Westbrook shared that the lack of AI literacy led students to hide the use of AI as an 'underground' practise, teaching themselves how to use it but not fully knowing exactly how it works or the ethics around using it. To introduce AI literacy, the panellists argued that equitable access to the technology is vital. Students and teachers alike should be made aware of new technologies, and be able to access and use them. Professor Anvit highlighted that without equitable access, educators risk a missed opportunity to engage and pace with new technologies, leading to the misuse of AI among their students in the classroom and beyond.

Humanistic approaches are still central to promoting AI literacy. From clear communication of the policy and expectations, students need to be made aware of their agency in engaging with AI. Ms Smith noted that it may not be required to teach students the 'right' way of using AI, but to instead teach them the skills to be transparent about AI use and be critical of AI's output. Dr Westbrook raised the concern about the possibility of Generative AI eroding students' confidence in their own skills. She highlighted that students need to be reminded of the importance of their abilities and opinions over AI output, keeping in mind that AI is only one among many tools, and that it is not inherently better than already implemented tools or the students' own capabilities. Similarly, Dr McMinn raised the issue of 'cognitive offloading,' a state in which students offload their thinking to AI, hence reducing critical thinking abilities. To Mr Bielik, the question behind this issue is not about how we prevent it, but rather about how we acknowledge the change and think about the next steps. Dr Lo pointed out the role of humans in moderating the integration of AI as one of the tools necessary for education, but probably not the creativity aspect. Dr McMinn countered that AI can be the tool that facilitates creativity by integrating it into design thinking instead of the learning process. In addition, teachers should ensure that AI is used for reflective purposes, e.g., some chatbots are designed to give examples but not answers.

6.3. Not Only for Students: Equipping Educators with AI Literacy

While AI literacy is a major concern when students use AI, educators and their positioning in the process of integrating AI into education was less discussed. The panel highlighted the need to train teachers and educators and enhance their capacity to use AI in their classrooms and pedagogical approaches. Dr McMinn raised the example of the lack of concern for AI among faculty members in the humanities, disregarding the impact of AI across disciplines. In another example, Dr Ceballos highlighted the hesitancy and lack of AI literacy among professors in using AI in their own classrooms, while regulations and penalties for the misuse of AI have already been implemented in academia. What is important for teachers is to accept, adapt, and adjust to AI, not deny it. Dr McMinn highlighted the importance of professional development, using analysis and the use of big data on students and AI or building capacity to deal with complex teaching environments as examples. From the Singaporean perspective, Dr Lo raised the example of how the Ministry of Education arranged sessions where all levels of educational institutions met and shared about what is being taught, what tools are being used to teach their students, and what tools the teachers have been trained to use. This will create a stream or connection of knowledge for the students, and prepare the teachers to be better-equipped with the skills to use the required tools in adjusting their curriculum.

At the implementation level, the most effective way to equip educators is to test and implement AI policy on them as well. Professor Anvit presented an example of academic staff being required to demonstrate their AI competency as a part of the upskilling process. A policy paper outlining the guidelines for academic staff was implemented, with an emphasis on professional development activities. They were given the opportunity to participate in the 'AI Challenge' by including AI as a tool in their proposed research projects, and funds were awarded to the best project proposals, funding them to their completion. This encouraged educators to learn together and share their best practices in implementing AI into their projects and essentially led to the application of such practises in their classrooms. They were also encouraged to contribute to the institutional Academic Guidelines on the use of Generative AI. The guideline was, at times, irrelevant as a central guideline due to the fast-changing nature of AI technologies. Realising that there will not always be a perfect or even static guide, the guideline was turned into a working document that academic staff have the right to contribute to and inform from their own classroom experiences. The guideline has since transformed into a conversational document for transmitting information and sharing best practices.

6.4. AI is Not a Threat

The discussions drew the conclusion that stakeholders in the education field are now past the question of whether AI is a threat: they agree that it is not. Rather, it is a 'technological stepping stone' in education, as Mr Bielik described. Changes often cause anxiety, and the introduction of AI into the educational landscape did just that. As challenges still loom large and AI becomes more integrated into the classroom and society at large, new questions about how both students and teachers adapt and adjust to the changes AI has brought about arise. AI literacy is the key for both students and teachers alike to be aware of AI's limitations, which will result in the responsible use and effective utilisation of AI to improve what they want to do or achieve.

Mr Lowell Sheppard (top), Dr James W. McNally (bottom-left) and Dr Sela V. Panapasa (bottom right) deliver a workshop on writing successful grant applications.

7. Capacity-Building Programme

As part of its ongoing efforts to give back to its community, IAFOR has developed its capacity-building programme to offer workshops and seminars to onsite IAFOR conference attendees. At the Asian Conference on Education (ACE2024) in Tokyo, IAFOR organised three workshops: one on successful grant application writing, one on developing academic skills for a successful academic career, and one on ethnographic pedagogy.

In their joint workshop on 'Writing a Successful Grant Application: Mastering Significance, Innovation, and Approach for Your Career', Dr James W. McNally of the NACDA Program on Aging and the University of Michigan, United States; Dr Sela V. Panapasa of the University of Michigan, and IAFOR's Director of Development, Mr Lowell Sheppard of the Never Too Late Academy, Japan, talked about the broad scope of academic grant development, community engagement for research, and developing funding to support independent initiatives. According to Dr McNally, 'we don't train faculty members enough' in terms of grant writing. We tell them to use others' texts as examples, thereby copying other people's style and never developing their own. 'We should invest more in workshops and training like this,' he said before listing the important things to consider for a successful grant application. In her part about community engagement for research, and in line with the main focus of the ACE2024 conference, Dr Panapasa emphasised that 'all the scientific work wouldn't happen without *people*. It is when the community becomes an active member of the research process that they become equal partners in this process'. Drawing from his 57 years of experience in raising funds for building communities and sustainable development, Mr Sheppard outlined the most important rules for successful fundraising initiatives.

In the second workshop titled 'Developing Academic Skills for a Successful Academic Career', Professor Umberto Ansaldo of The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong and The University of Western Australia, Australia, talked about the academic skill of publishing. From how to write an abstract and the review process to academic journals and book publishing, delegates had the opportunity to engage with Professor Ansaldo in an extensive Q&A session, clearly invested in how to build their academic careers.

The workshop 'Teaching Ethnography by Walking: Pedagogy in Action' conducted by IAFOR Global Fellow Dr Yanhua Zhou focused on reimagining ethnographic pedagogy through walking and reawakening the bodily sensory capacities during fieldwork. Based on her current project 'Fieldwork in Action' with her students, the workshop aimed to explore how the body can be actively engaged in conducting research. Dr Zhou first invited participants to define the purpose of walking, and the responses were objective, such as going to places, exercising, or sightseeing. Participants were later asked to walk around the room with their eyes closed, which prompted them to reflect on their bodily awareness and sensory engagement in the absence of sight. This exercise highlighted the importance of senses like hearing and touch in navigation and observation. Participants shared diverse reflections, ranging from heightened anxiety and altered perceptions of time to greater reliance on sensory input. Dr Zhou's workshop demonstrated how bodily engagement can enhance ethnographic practices and deepen researchers' understanding of their surroundings, and encouraged participants to utilise their senses and attend to the finer details of their environment.

Below: Professor Umberto Ansaldo describes how to develop academic skills for a successful academic career.

8. Conclusion

Communities are the backbone of society. Everything from information and material exchange to emotionally relying on others is taking place within groups we belong to. This is why it is important to keep our communities as healthy as possible, so that the well-being of community members – and of society as a whole – can be guaranteed. The 16th Asian Conference on Education (ACE2024) highlighted ways in which we can create, protect, and foster healthy communities, whether those are location-specific, or academic, political, and cultural in nature. Education plays a central role in fostering collaborative environments within and between communities and serving those in need, but educational institutions need to recognise their social responsibility and reevaluate their goals to avoid becoming 'ivory towers'. Culture and the Arts are another way through which we can indirectly discuss challenging topics that threaten to destroy the fabric that holds communities together, without coming across as condescending or violent.

With recent changes brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing proliferation of AI, education, culture, and the Arts may be seen as being under attack and unable to assist communities. It is important to be aware of both the remaining and potential negative impacts of the pandemic and new technologies. However, instead of viewing the recent occurrences only as a threat, we should look at the opportunities that COVID-19 and AI have brought with them. For example, blended learning and innovation in the creation and dissemination of knowledge and information can have an immense positive impact on the socio-economic development of community members and the citizens of tomorrow.

It is high time for educational institutions to reflect on their identity and their future direction. We need to rethink how we educate future generations through community involvement and how we address global challenges related to cultural preservation and social transformation.

IURS – Undergraduate Capacity-Building Session

The IAFOR Undergraduate Research Symposium in Tokyo 2024 was the continuation of the Asian Undergraduate Research Symposium (AURS), IAFOR's long-standing capacity-building programme aimed for the undergraduate students as an initiative to support the academics of the future.

At IURS in Tokyo 2024, we welcomed 35 presenters from China, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Delegates met online prior to the onsite day for initial training on presentation and interpersonal skills, and preparing posters for their presentations. On the onsite day at the Toshi Center Hotel, students met with Dr Haldane and Professor Grant Black of Chuo University, Japan, and Professor Dexter Da Silva of Keisen University for the final briefing sessions. These sessions included how to interact with other delegates at the conference, presentation pitch, and networking skills essential to connecting delegates from different disciplines. The symposium received submissions in the streams of Science, Technology, Engineering & Math, Economics and Business Studies, Education, Political Science: Administration, Governance and Finance, Psychology and the Behavioral Sciences, Sociology, Social Work and Social Concerns, among others.

After the final briefing sessions, IURS delegates presented their posters at the main conference poster session, which was attended by general conference participants, including their peers and professors. The IURS Poster Presentation Session was well received, as the students effectively delivered their presentations and demonstrated their commitment to their research. Attendees expressed their appreciation for the students' creative and timely research topics, as well as their determination to grasp the opportunity to present their research at a professional conference. To learn more about IURS, its upcoming schedule, and how you or your network can participate, please visit the symposium website.

Conference Networking & Cultural Events

The Conference Networking Events provided spaces where participants could gather and network, furthering their connections within the IAFOR network in professional and social settings outside the conference venue. The Welcome Reception and the Conference Dinner are designed to engage delegates, plenary speakers, and IAFOR executives in more relaxed settings, allowing attendees to exchange ideas, discuss research, and explore potential partnerships in more relaxed, casual spaces. Including these networking events allows delegates at all levels in their career to better integrate with one another, as well as form connections and potential cooperation opportunities at IAFOR and beyond. Such events are integral to IAFOR's mission of fostering international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Welcome Reception

The Welcome Reception was held during the pre-conference programme at The Public Red Akasaka, a gastropub located inside the Centurion Hotel Classic Akasaka, a few minutes' walk from the conference venue. Open to all registered delegates, the Welcome Reception provides a more relaxed setting where participants can become better acquainted with each other at the conference. Creating such spaces for delegates to network and form long-lasting connections within our conference programme is essential to our conference planning.

Conference Dinner

The Conference Dinner was hosted at Shunju Tameikesanno, a stylish Japanese restaurant with spectacular views of Tokyo's metropolitan skyline. Shunju Tameikesanno has become a staple in IAFOR's Tokyo Conference Series' programme, hosting our Conference Dinner event for IAFOR's Tokyo-based conferences throughout the year. The course menu places particular focus on incorporating local, seasonal produce and modern flavours into traditional Japanese dishes, ensuring a unique dining experience each visit. This has proven to be especially popular with delegates as the Conference Dinner at Shunju Tameikesanno has consistently sold out.

The aim of the Conference Dinner is to provide an exclusive event where plenary speakers, IAFOR Executives, and VIP guests can partake in more in-depth conversations with the participants. IAFOR Conference Dinners are always held at spectacular venues, offering high-quality dining, unique cultural experiences, and a welcoming platform for attendees to connect.

Conference Cultural Event: Kimono Workshop

A Kimono Workshop was held on Wednesday, November 27 with kimono instructor Satoko Yamada, a specialist in traditional kimono dressing. Delegates who attended the workshop were given an in-depth overview of the history and traditions of Japanese kimono through Yamada-sensei's expert instruction. Yamada-sensei explained the rules and intricacies of kimono during a live demonstration of how to dress in the gala style for both men and women, with the aid of live models. The event included a Q&A session for audience members to pose questions and engage with Yamada-sensei as she demonstrated each step with the assistance of models. 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.

ACE2024
Key Statistics
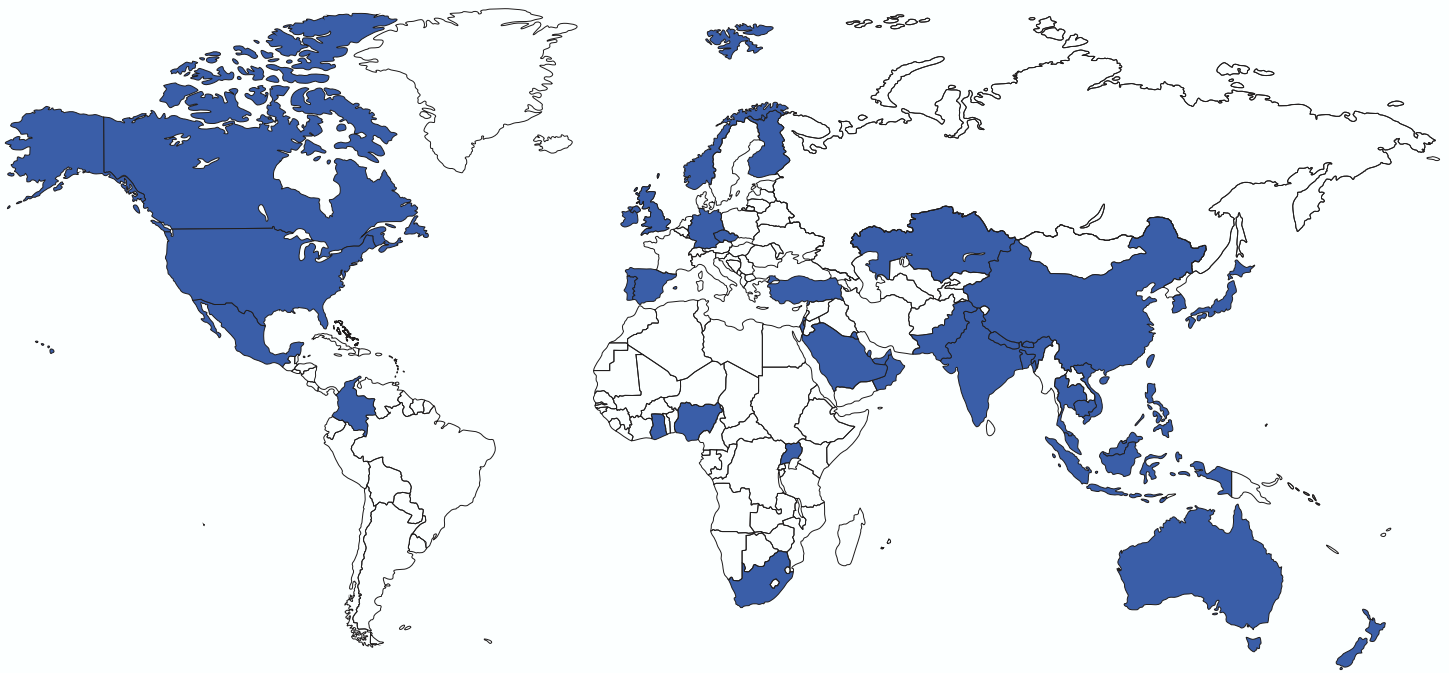
international
intercultural
interdisciplinary

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

ACE2024 has attracted 710 delegates from 47 countries

Taiwan	83	United Kingdom	9	Slovakia	2
Philippines	71	Germany	6	Bhutan	1
Singapore	70	South Africa	6	Cayman Islands	1
Thailand	66	Kuwait	5	Denmark	1
Japan	58	Portugal	5	Ghana	1
Indonesia	50	Israel	4	Ireland	1
United States	43	Norway	4	Macau	1
Malaysia	41	Oman	4	Nepal	1
Australia	28	Saudi Arabia	4	Pakistan	1
China	23	Bangladesh	3	Qatar	1
Hong Kong	20	Cambodia	3	Uganda	1
South Korea	13	Colombia	3		
Canada	11	Czech Republic	3		
Spain	11	Mexico	3		
India	10	New Zealand	3	**Total Attendees**	710
Vietnam	10	Turkey	3	**Total Onsite Presentations**	445
Kazakhstan	9	Brunei	2	**Total Online Presentations**	142
United Arab Emirates	9	Finland	2	**Total Countries**	47

ACE2024 Key Statistics

Date of creation: March 5, 2025

710 DELEGATES
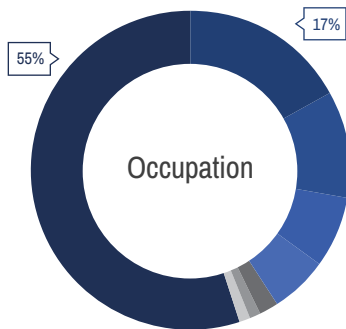## FROM 47 COUNTRIES

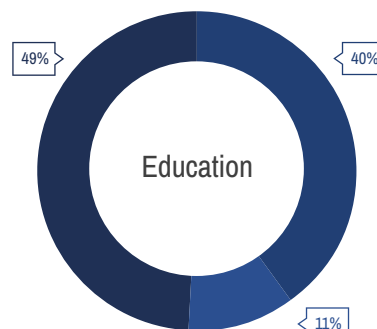**445** Onsite Presentations

142 Online Presentations

**401** Institutions and Organisations

Occupation

55% University Faculty
17% Doctoral Student
12% Postgraduate Student
7% Public Sector/Practitioner
5% Other
2% Postdoctoral Fellow/Instructor
1% Independent Scholar
1% Private Sector

(chart labels: 55%, 17%, 12%)

Education

49% Doctoral Degree
40% Masters Degree
11% Bachelors Degree

(chart labels: 49%, 40%, 11%)

Top Streams

1. Teaching Experiences, Pedagogy, Practice & Praxis (79)
2. Learning Experiences, Student Learning & Learner Diversity (74)
3. Design, Implementation & Assessment of Innovative Technologies in Education (65)
4. Higher Education (47)
5. Foreign Languages Education & Applied Linguistics (including ESL/TESL/TEFL) (41)

(bar chart values: 79, 74, 65, 47, 41)
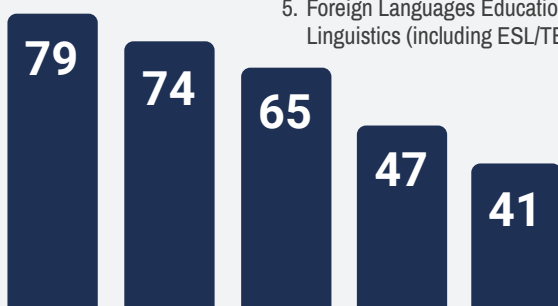
Top Countries by Delegate Attendance

1. Taiwan (12%)
2. Philippines (10%)
3. Singapore (10%)
4. Thailand (9%)
5. Japan (8%)

(bar chart values: 12%, 10%, 10%, 9%, 8%)
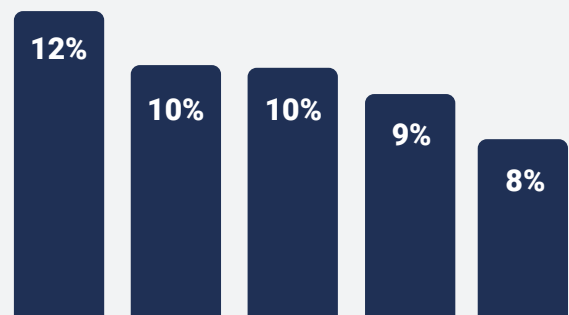
587 Total Presentations

260 Hours of Content

Multiple Authored vs. Single Authored Submissions

61%   39%

international | intercultural | interdisciplinary

pport Chatbots for the Elderly:
Resource, and Interactive Learning Partner
(88636)

ng,Chuang & Ya-Ling,Wang*
*Corresponding Author
an Normal University (NTNU),Taiwan

Study Design

1. Participants: A tou... ... dult participants (mean age... ...3.2), consisting of 4 men and 4...
2. Procedure: A one-we... ...uter interaction experiment ... 2023.
3. Data Colle... ...were c...

...ency of occurrence	Percentage	
51		
18		
56		
28		

...users p...
...g greet...
...entity in...
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...eractions...
...n conventi...
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NATIONAL TAIWAN NORMAL UNIVERS...

"Exploring Middle-Aged
Online Intergenerational Co...
and Attitude Towar...

Li-Chi L...
*Com...
National Taiwa...

Background

Advances in technology and an aging society, accelerated by the pandemic have recently propelled the development of emerging educational models such as online intergenerational courses. The aim of ...dy is to understand their willingness to ...n intergenerational online courses.

...n questionnaire survey method to ...le adults aged 45 and above in

Fill out the questionnaire with survey cake.

...cipants were gathered, consisting ...68% women. The average ...8).

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Conference Photographs

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