

# Self and the other in the Confucian cultural context: Implications of China's higher education development for comparative studies

**Yang Rui**

***Chair: Nirmala Rao***

Contemporary comparative and international studies of higher education have overwhelmingly portrayed the powerful influence of economic and political realities. Cultural dimensions, especially those of traditional ways of thinking, have often been ignored, despite their omnipresence. Adopting the lens of traditional Chinese cultural thinking, this paper offers an alternative perspective to look at China's higher education reform and development. It demonstrates a different historical trajectory of higher education development resulted from the traditional Chinese way of thinking. Borrowing a thesis of the structure of culture, this paper examines the tensions in the interactions in higher education between the traditional Chinese and the imposed Western modes of thinking. It argues that it is erroneous to treat universities in different cultural contexts as the same entity, and warns that without an infusion of traditional education values, universities in China risk losing touch with their cultural contexts in their quest for world-class status. Using China's higher education development as an example, the paper discusses the implications of cultural context for comparative studies.

**Rui Yang** is Associate Professor and Assistant Dean (Research Projects and Centres), Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong. He has worked in different higher education systems, with particular interest in crossculturalism in education policy, higher education, and sociology of education. After nearly a decade of teaching and research at Shantou University in Guangdong, he received a Ph.D. from the University of Sydney in 2001. He has then taught and researched at Universities of Western Australia, Monash and Hong Kong. He has written extensively in the field of comparative and international education. His current interest is focused on comparative and global studies in education policy and higher education internationalization.

**12:45 - 2:00 pm; Tuesday 11 October 2011**  
**LG02 Hui Oi Chow Science Building**

***All welcome!***



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