

Editorial

In this May/June 2025 JIRSEA Editorial: “Charting New Frontiers in Higher Education Research,” 12 papers were accepted from the initial 49 submissions, of which 19 were rejected as they were not within JIRSEA's focus, and of the remaining 30 submissions which underwent the Preliminary Review, 16 submissions went through the Double-Blind Review for the Journal of Institutional Research South East Asia, May 2025 Issue. Higher education is at a transformative crossroads, with financial pressures, demographic shifts, and evolving stakeholder expectations prompting universities to rethink their structures, pedagogies and technological strategies. This special issue assembles twelve cutting-edge studies that collectively illuminate four critical domains of inquiry: institutional reform and quality assurance, curriculum alignment with employability, student motivation, self-regulation, and engagement, and the digital ecosystem reshaping learning and research.

1. ***Institutional Reform and Quality Assurance (3 articles)*** – Three articles examine how universities adapt their organizational DNA to deliver better performance, equity, and relevance. Lin et al. (Article 1) analyze Taiwan’s first involuntary merger, National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology (NKUST), showing that while campus proximity preserved stable undergraduate demographics, the fusion of distinct research cultures stimulated heterogeneity in research capacity and a robust uptick in industry-academia projects. Their call for longitudinal follow-up acknowledges that the benefits of mergers often crystallize only over a decade. Pandey, Bose, and Rathor (Article 2) shift the lens to India, examining whether ownership (public vs. private), campus size, and institutional age impact engineering institute ratings. Through Career360 data on 299 institutions, they dismantle the myth that public institutions necessarily underperform, revealing instead that legacy (age) and scale are the strongest predictors of perceived quality. Their findings equip policymakers and administrators with evidence to guide infrastructure investments and branding strategies. Zhang, Liu, and Jang (Article 3) map South Korea’s three-stage internationalization journey (2001–2023) from quantitative expansion to quality management to integrated oversight, tracking growth to 181,842 international students while highlighting persistent imbalances in origin countries, disciplines, and regional spread. Their policy prescriptions to boost non-capital science and tech appeal and provide tailored support for Asian cohorts resonate across nations confronting demographic decline.
2. ***Curriculum Alignment and Employability (3 articles)*** – Ensuring that academic programs translate into marketable skills remains a universal imperative. Pham et al. (Article 4) examine 30 syllabi and survey 470 undergraduates at a Vietnamese university to uncover that employability skills, personal qualities, problem-solving, and communication are unevenly signaled: encoded in objectives but under-assessed in exams and thinly enacted in activities. They argue for practice-based syllabus redesign that aligns learning outcomes, pedagogical tasks and assessments to close the theory-practice gap. Wijaya, Mustakim, Sutadji, Isnandar and Widiyanti (Article 5) focus on vocational education, demonstrating through a 312-student survey that entrepreneurial experience most powerfully predicts entrepreneurial competency (EC), while structured business coaching both directly enhances EC and amplifies the training-experience nexus. Their

model highlights the importance of integrating adaptive coaching into hands-on modules to foster an entrepreneurial mindset. Meanwhile, Nguyen, Thong, Uyen and Thanh (Article 6) probe language pedagogy, using structural equation modeling on data from 80 Vietnamese English majors to show that students' perceptions of teacher immediacy drive willingness to communicate (WTC) both directly and via their "Ideal L2 Self," accounting for 51.7 percent of variance in WTC. Their work suggests that streamlined immediacy scales can help instructors deploy the most impactful behaviors to boost communicative readiness.

3. ***Student Motivation, Self-Regulation and Engagement (2 articles)*** – Two studies illuminate the psychological underpinnings of student performance and persistence. Poh, Cheow, Lim, Yap, and Pung (Article 7) employ PLS-SEM on 160 Malaysian undergraduates to validate a hierarchical goal model, which suggests that self-control reduces academic procrastination only through its positive effect on grit. This finding reframes self-control interventions as the foundation for nurturing the sustained effort that grit embodies, while Carpio, Ablan, Rivera, and Villarica (Article 10) examine the disruptive context of COVID-19, triangulating a 145-student procrastination survey with qualitative focus groups to identify emotional distress and comfort in delay as the primary triggers of higher procrastination in remote learning. Their integrated lens informs the design of mental health supports and time management scaffolds for online cohorts.
4. ***The Digital Ecosystem: Adoption, Frontiers and AI in Education (4 articles)*** – As digital technologies proliferate, educators and researchers are racing to understand and leverage their potential. Tran (Article 8) analyzes Scopus bibliometric data (2019–2023) to map emerging fronts in Digital Assessment, Blockchain, AI, Lifelong Learning, and Online Learning, introducing novel metrics (Growth Rate, ΔT , Emerging Factor) to highlight Digital Assessment and Blockchain as the most rapidly evolving fields. His global institutional mapping signals where collaborative research investments can be most fertile. Tan, Ayub, Hui, Yoke and Seng (Article 9) survey 200 Malaysian mathematics trainee teachers, finding that while attitudes and beliefs toward digital tools are broadly positive, actual usage is uneven due to access barriers and uneven professional training. Their data-driven call for improved infrastructure, attitude-building workshops and targeted development programs charts a path to strengthen digital pedagogy. Chu (Article 11) offers a timely thematic synthesis of 15 studies (2020–2024) on QuillBot in EFL academic writing. By extracting themes of emotional and behavioral impact, skill-building efficacy, user experience and accessibility, and ethical challenges, he paints a balanced portrait of AI-assisted writing: transformative for paraphrasing and motivation, yet fraught with risks of over-reliance and equity gaps, prompting a research agenda for longitudinal, cross-cultural, and ethical inquiry. Finally, Nguyen and Vo (Article 12) address the issue through a mixed-methods case study of third-year translation students in Vietnam, revealing that ChatGPT speeds up drafting and enhances translation quality, but also introduces concerns about dependency. Their recommendation to embed AI literacy and critical-use workshops into translation curricula presages a future in which human-AI co-authorship becomes the norm.

Collectively, these twelve articles traverse the spectrum from macro-level policy and structural change to micro-level classroom practice and student cognition, all undergirded by an imperative to align higher education more closely with societal, economic and technological demands. As universities navigate mergers, rating systems and demographic headwinds, and as faculty integrate employability skills, coach entrepreneurship, foster communication, and harness digital tools, these empirical studies and systematic analyses provide both a roadmap and a provocation: to continue interrogating how we organize, teach and learn in an ever-more complex world. We trust that this issue sparks new collaborations, fuels policy dialogues and inspires future research that bridges disciplines and geographies in the pursuit of educational excellence.

The key synopses of these 12 papers are as follows:

- **Article 1: Merging for Progress in Higher Education: The Case of NKUST from Taiwan** led by Szu-Yin Lin, Kuan-Li Chen, Wei-Chi Wu, and Chun-Hsien Kuo of National Kaohsiung University of Science and Technology (Taiwan), this study aimed to assess the early outcomes of Taiwan's first involuntary higher-education merger (February 2018) on undergraduate education. Employing a pre- and post-merger case study design, the authors first reviewed the legal and administrative processes underpinning the merger, then conducted a quantitative comparison of institutional and student-level data (enrollment figures, demographics, and industry-academia collaboration metrics) spanning 2017–2022. They found that, while student residential and workplace distributions remained stable due to campus proximity, the fusion of distinct research profiles significantly boosted NKUST's overall research output and the number and funding of industry-collaboration projects, indicating enhanced research capacity emerging from the merger.
- **Article 2: Institutional Age, Size, Ownership and Ratings: An Empirical Study of Indian Higher Education Institutions** by Jayesh Pandey (Institute of Rural Management Anand), Pallav Bose (KJ Somaiya Institute of Management, Mumbai), and Abhinav Shankar Rathor (Jaipuria Institute of Management, Indore) set out to determine whether engineering-institute ratings in India vary by ownership type and to evaluate the predictive roles of campus size and institutional age. Their methodology involved a preliminary qualitative audit (interviews with prospective students and an industry expert), followed by statistical analysis of secondary data from Career360.com covering 299 institutes. Ownership differences in ratings were examined using one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis assessed the influence of campus size and age on ratings. The authors report no significant government-vs-private rating gap, but both larger campus size ($\beta \approx 0.32$, $p < .01$) and greater institutional age ($\beta \approx 0.27$, $p < .05$) emerged as significant positive predictors of higher ratings.
- **Article 3: Internationalization Policies in South Korean Higher Education: Attracting and Managing International Students** by Zhang Yuningjing (Sungkyunkwan University), Liu Ting (University of Suwon), and Jang Wan Ko (Sungkyunkwan University) investigated South Korea's higher-education internationalization policies from 2003 to 2023. Combining qualitative content analysis of government policy documents with descriptive analysis of Ministry of Education enrollment statistics, they segmented policy evolution into three phases: quantitative expansion (2001–2007), quality management (2008–2013), and integration management (2014–2023). The study revealed steady growth in international enrollment, reaching 181,842 by 2023. Still, persistent imbalances in student origins, fields of study, and institutional locations, prompting recommendations for targeted support for underrepresented cohorts and non-capital institutions.

- **Article 4: Bridging the Gap: Integrating Employability Skills – From Course Syllabi to Classroom Instruction** by Hoa Pham, Luong D. Dinh, Cuong M. Nguyen, and Thao N.T. Nguyen of Nha Trang University examined how employability skills are embedded in course syllabi and perceived by students at a Vietnamese university. Using a convergent mixed-methods design, they performed qualitative content analysis on 30 syllabi and surveyed 470 students. Content analysis revealed frequent inclusion of personal qualities (43%) and problem-solving (47%) in learning objectives, but their rare appearance in assessments (4% and 20%, respectively). ANOVA revealed significant differences in engagement by year level ($F = 4.394$, $p = .013$), and correlation ($r = .503$, $p < .01$) confirmed a moderate alignment between syllabus design and career relevance. The authors conclude that syllabi require clearer practice-based design to align intended skills with assessment practices better.
- **Article 5: The Impact of Business Coaching on the Entrepreneurial Competencies of Vocational Students in Higher Education** by Robby Wijaya¹, Siti Salina Mustakim, Eddy Sutadji, Isnandar, and Widiyanti (Postgraduate School, Malang State University & University Putra Malaysia) explored how entrepreneurial mindset, experience, and business coaching influence vocational students' entrepreneurial competencies, and whether coaching moderates these relations. Through a quantitative explanatory survey of 312 students, hierarchical regression analyses demonstrated that entrepreneurial experience exerted the strongest direct effect on competency ($\beta = .45$), followed by mindset and coaching ($\beta = .21$). Moreover, coaching significantly strengthened the linkage between experience and competency, underscoring the need for adaptive coaching integrated into experiential entrepreneurship curricula.
- **Article 6: Exploring the Relationship of Students' Perceptions of Teacher Immediacy and Self-Motivation on Communicative Willingness among Vietnamese English Majors** by Nguyen Thi Diem Ha (Yersin University of Dalat), Nguyen Vi Thong, Nguyen Quynh Uyen, and Pham Thi Trang Thanh investigated how perceived teacher immediacy and the Ideal L2 Self influence willingness to communicate (WTC). Administering a self-report questionnaire to 80 English majors, they applied PLS-SEM to test direct and mediated effects. Their findings indicate a significant direct influence of immediacy on WTC ($\beta = .58$, $p < .001$) and an indirect effect via the Ideal L2 Self (mediated effect = .22), together accounting for 51.7% of the variance in WTC. The authors suggest focused immediacy strategies and item-reduced scales for targeted pedagogical interventions.
- **Article 7: Self-Control and Grit: How Do They Affect Academic Procrastination among Malaysian Undergraduates?** By Poh Chua Siah and colleagues (Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman), it was tested whether self-control reduces academic procrastination directly or via grit. In an online survey of 160 undergraduates, PLS-SEM supported an indirect-only mediation model: self-control influenced procrastination entirely through grit (indirect effect = $-.36$, $p < .01$). These results highlight grit's pivotal role in long-term goal pursuit and suggest that interventions aiming to foster self-control should also cultivate sustained perseverance.
- **Article 8: Emerging Research Fronts in the Digital Educational Ecosystem: A Systematic Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis** by Tran Ai Cam (Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Vietnam) conducted a bibliometric study of Scopus records (2019–2023) to identify rapidly emerging topics in digital education. Introducing metrics Growth Rate (R), publication–citation gap (ΔT), and Emerging Factor (EF) the analysis pinpointed Digital Assessment ($R = 1.8$, $EF = 0.72$) and Blockchain ($R = 1.6$, $EF = 0.68$) as the fastest-emerging

fronts. Geographic mapping revealed leadership from institutions in the U.S., China, and Europe, providing strategic insights for prioritizing future research.

- **Article 9: Assessing Digital Technology Adoption in Mathematics Teaching: Attitudes, Beliefs and Usage among Training Teachers** by Tan Tong Hock*¹, Ahmad Fauzi Mohd Ayub², Kee Boon Hui¹, Chin Wan Yoke¹, and Sim Hong Seng³ (Tunku Abdul Rahman University & Universiti Putra Malaysia) surveyed 200 mathematics trainee teachers to examine how attitudes and beliefs shape digital-tool usage. Employing descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests, they found generally positive attitudes and beliefs. Still, significant variation in actual usage ($F = 5.12$, $p = .002$), driven by access barriers and uneven training. The authors recommend bolstering infrastructure and tailored professional development to enhance integration.
- **Article 10: Investigating the Triggers and Outcomes of Academic Procrastination in Online Learning Environment amid the COVID-19 Pandemic** by Cherry Lyn M. Carpio*¹, Alliana M. Ablan², Ralph Randel R. Rivera³, and Mia V. Villarica⁴ (National University & Laguna State Polytechnic University, Philippines) combined an online survey ($N=145$) using Busko's Procrastination Scale with focus-group discussions ($N=16$). Through the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, they identified emotional distress and the comfort of delaying tasks as the principal triggers of procrastination, noting elevated procrastination levels during pandemic-induced remote learning and recommending supportive strategies for student well-being and time management skills.
- **Article 11: Integrating QuillBot to Enhance the Students' Academic Writing: Opportunities and Challenges** by Chu Wenxuan (Universiti Malaya) performed a thematic qualitative review of 15 peer-reviewed studies (2020–2024) on QuillBot's use by EFL learners. Thematic analysis yielded four domains: emotional and behavioral impact, skill-building effectiveness, user experience and accessibility, and ethical challenges. The analysis concluded that while QuillBot improves paraphrasing, grammar correction, and student confidence, over-reliance, loss of creativity, and access inequities necessitate AI literacy training and longitudinal, cross-cultural research.
- **Article 12: The Application of ChatGPT in Translation Learning: A Case Study in Vietnam** by Nguyen Thi Thu Huong* and Vo Thi Kim Anh (University of Foreign Language Studies, University of Da Nang) employed a mixed-methods design, comprising a questionnaire survey of 119 third-year translation students, followed by workshops with 15 participants, to examine the impact of ChatGPT on translation learning. Their findings reveal that ChatGPT accelerates drafting and enhances text quality, but raises concerns about dependency, leading to recommendations for embedding AI-critical thinking modules and structured ChatGPT training into translation curricula.

JIRSEA Editor: Assoc. Prof. Teay Shawyun, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAPERS

Merging for Progress in Higher Education: The Case of NKUST from Taiwan by <i>Szu-Yin Lin, Kuan-Li Chen, Wei-Chi Wu & Chun-Hsien Kuo</i>	1
Institutional Age, Size, Ownership and Ratings: An Empirical Study of Indian Higher Education Institutions by <i>Jayesh Pandey, Pallav Bose & Abhinav Shankar Rathor</i>	21
Internationalization Policies in South Korean Higher Education: Attracting and Managing International Students by <i>Zhang Yuningjing, Liu Ting & Jang Wan Ko</i>	49
Bridging the Gap: Integrating Employability Skills: From Course Syllabi to Classroom Instruction by <i>Hoa Pham, Luong D. Dinh, Cuong M. Nguyen & Thao N.T. Nguyen</i>	71
The Impact of Business Coaching on the Entrepreneurial Competencies of Vocational Students in Higher Education by <i>Robby Wijaya, Siti Salina Mustakim, Eddy Sutadji, Isnandar & Widiyanti</i>	91
Exploring the Relationship of Students' Perceptions of Teacher Immediacy and Self-Motivation on Communicative Willingness Among Vietnamese English Majors by <i>Nguyen Thi Diem Ha, Nguyen Vi Thong, Nguyen Quynh Uyen & Pham Thi Trang Thanh</i>	110
Exploring the Relationship of Students' Perceptions of Teacher Immediacy and Self-Motivation on Communicative Willingness Among Vietnamese English Majors by <i>Nguyen Thi Diem Ha, Nguyen Vi Thong, Nguyen Quynh Uyen & Pham Thi Trang Thanh</i>	132
Exploring the Relationship of Students' Perceptions of Teacher Immediacy and Self-Motivation on Communicative Willingness Among Vietnamese English Majors by <i>Nguyen Thi Diem Ha, Nguyen Vi Thong, Nguyen Quynh Uyen & Pham Thi Trang Thanh</i>	151
Assessing Digital Technology Adoption in Mathematics Teaching: Attitudes, Beliefs and Usage Among Training Teachers by <i>Tan Tong Hock, Ahmad Fauzi Mohd Ayub, Kee Boon Hui, Chin Wan Yoke & Sim Hong Seng</i>	169
Investigating the Triggers and Outcomes of Academic Procrastination in Online Learning Environment amid the Covid-19 Pandemic by <i>Cherry Lyn M. Carpio, Alliana M. Ablan, Ralph Randel R. Rivera & Mia V. Villarica</i>	182

Integrating QuillBot to Enhance the Students' Academic Writing: Opportunities and Challenges by <i>Chu Wenxuan</i>	197
--	-----

The Application of ChatGPT in Translation Learning: A Case Study in Vietnam by <i>Nguyen Thi Thu Huong & Vo Thi Kim Anh</i>	224
---	-----
