Adopting Neoliberal Values in Taiwan's Higher Education Governance: *A Hybridisation Process*

Sheng-Ju Chan [a] Cheng-Cheng Yang [b] (corresponding author: yccjason@mail.ncyu.edu.tw) and William Yat Wai Lo [c]
[a] *National Chung Cheng University*
[b] *National Chiayi University*
[c] *Durham University*

Abstract
This paper considers the adoption of Western neoliberalism in Taiwan's higher education (HE) governance as a hybridisation process in which the influences of political democratisation, social liberalisation and Chinese cultural traditions intersect with contemporary Western norms and values. The paper draws on data from interviews with senior university administrators and education ministry officials to delineate the resistance to the competitive ethos embedded in neoliberalism and the retention of state presence and intervention in university governance, highlighting Taiwan's historical, socio-political and cultural contexts. This account exemplifies how various historical, socio-political and cultural factors influence Taiwan's HE governance and how Western norms and values are absorbed, questioned and resisted during the hybridisation process.

Keywords
Hybridisation, neoliberalism, westernisation, university governance, Taiwan

Introduction

The global–local dynamics have long influenced Taiwan's higher education (HE) development. In the 1990s, a movement promoting the indigenisation of academia emerged, given that some academics showed strong concerns over academic colonialism brought about by HE internationalisation (Yang, 1999). These academics advocated that social sciences should be firmly rooted locally, thereby responding to local needs (Yeh, 1993). Some psychologists thus launched a local journal called *Indigenous Psychology* (本土心理學研究) in 1993 to promote the scholarship concerned with local issues and informed by indigenous methods and theories and to resist the imported Western scientific norms and paradigms.

This resistance to internationalisation (or, critically speaking, westernisation) can be contrasted with Taiwan's long history of learning from the West, particularly the US. While many senior professors in Taiwan were educated in the US, Taiwan's HE system was modelled on the US system (Wu et al., 1989; Lin, 2003). However, due to the socio-political transformation emerging since the late 1980s, the local or indigenous consciousness suppression was removed, and the emphasis on local and aboriginal cultural elements grew into a localisation process (or Taiwanisation) (Law, 1996; 2002). This tendency towards localisation stoked up the resistance to HE internationalisation and the associated neoliberal policies and practices, which were seen as expressions of the Anglo-American hegemony in models of HE that embodied Western supremacy (Marginson, 2022).

Meanwhile, despite the 50-year Japanese colonial rule and the significant influences from the US, Chinese cultural elements (e.g. Confucian values) remain an essential part of Taiwan's culture. The significance of Chinese culture in Taiwan's society corresponds to the cultural perspective on HE in East Asia, from which research explores how cultural traditions intersect and integrate with contemporary norms and values (e.g. neoliberalism) to form distinctive hybrid academic models in the region (Marginson, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2013). In the case of Taiwan, apart from combining Western and Confucian intellectual values, the hybridisation process also involves the emergence of a Taiwan-centric epistemic perspective on knowledge production, given the growth of Taiwanese consciousness.

This paper provides an account of the intersection among these historical, socio-political and cultural factors to exemplify the hybridisation process, focusing on adopting neoliberal values in HE. It begins with a brief review of Taiwan's history and HE development. It then explains how neoliberalism spread as a global cultural order and impacted Taiwan's HE. Next, the paper examines Taiwan's university governance. Its findings show how the competitive ethos of neoliberalism is moderated and why the state remains strong in Taiwan, thus illuminating the intertwining of various factors during the hybridisation process.

Origins and evolution of Taiwan's HE

As an island-state in East Asia, Taiwan experienced the ruling of various governments and colonisation over time. The island was originally the land of Taiwanese aborigines. In the 17th century, the Dutch and Spanish settled on the island. The rule under China's Ming and Qing dynasties marked the beginning of the Han Chinese polity in Taiwan. The island was ceded to Japan in 1895 after the First Sino–Japanese War (Morris, 2002). Moreover, the Japanese colonial administration attempted to assimilate the Han Chinese in Taiwan by introducing the Japanese language and culture through formal education (Tsurumi, 1979).

In this context, the modern education system was established in Taiwan to promote assimilation and meet the demands of the island's economy. Post-secondary colleges were established on the basis of the model of Japanese institutions during this period. Many of these colleges evolved into universities later.[1] In addition, Taihoku Imperial University, the first modern university in Taiwan and precursor to the current National Taiwan University, was founded in 1928 (Wu et al., 1989; Li, 2005).

Taiwan was briefly reunited with China after the Second World War. Thus, the island underwent a round of decolonisation in HE, which aimed to replace the HE model of Japan with that of modern China. In 1949, the Kuomintang (KMT or Chinese Nationalist Party) was defeated in the Chinese Civil War and relocated its government to Taiwan. In this political context, the KMT government was keen to promote Chinese culture and values in Taiwan's HE to strengthen ethnic solidarity (Hsieh, 2020). Meanwhile, following KMT, some universities were relocated from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan.[2] The goal of decolonisation, the policies and practices of promoting Chinese culture and the relocation of universities from the mainland justified the compulsory requirement for university students to study Chinese philosophy, such as the doctrine of the mean (中庸之道) and the five constant relationships (五倫) of Confucianism, during this period. Such an emphasis on Chinese culture and values also revealed the cultural roots of the centralised governance model in which state presence and intervention in university activities commonly occurred (Lin, 2020).

Although their Chinese roots were emphasised, the link between Taiwan's universities and higher learning in Imperial China was implicit. Instead, some of them were established in the mainland in the late 19th century based on the Western ideas of a university (Yang, 2013). Furthermore, the influences of the US education model on various education levels in China were obvious after the 1922 education reform. The practices of learning from the US continued after 1949. Thus, the current HE system in Taiwan was developed mainly on the basis of the US prototype, and the US model significantly influenced the curriculum and evaluation mechanisms in HE on the island (Wu et al., 1989).

Taiwan and its HE entered an age of liberalisation after significant political relaxation in the late 1980s. After martial law was lifted in 1987, Taiwan began democratisation, extensively promoting electoral democracy and civic participation (Ho, 1990). Political democratisation and social liberalisation stimulated public demand for university education and explained the rapid HE expansion during the period. Furthermore, the political and social changes democratised university campuses where a decentralised governance model appeared (Lo, 2010). Thus, universities began to apply the ideas of 'faculty governance' (教授治校) and

'campus democracy' (校園民主); self-management by faculty members has become an important discourse in university governance since the political democratisation (Chan, 2010; Chan & Yang, 2018). Meanwhile, the political change and the resulting emergence of a Taiwanese identity caused the formation and consolidation of indigenous subjectivity (在地主體性). Consequently, a tendency towards indigenisation (or Taiwanisation) emerged during this period (Law, 2002).

The indigenisation process intensified after 2000, given that the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the general election in the same year. In the meantime, globalisation led to a wave of HE internationalisation on the island. Although the responses to globalisation were integrated with domestic political and social changes and caused identity reconstitution in Taiwan (Law, 2002), HE internationalisation also implied an embodiment of neoliberalism. This point will be further explained in the next section.

In short, despite building upon the American HE system, Taiwan's historical connections with Japanese colonialism and Chinese cultural traditions substantially influenced HE development in the island-state. Although the promotion of Chinese culture that served as decolonisation, the KMT government inherited the colonial infrastructures in its HE system in Taiwan. Furthermore, colonial heritage was adopted as a cultural characteristic of post-colonial Taiwan that constituted part of Taiwanese localism/nationalism and identity (Ching, 2001), while many Taiwanese academic leaders received their education in the US and thus were profoundly affected by Western values (Wu et al., 1989). Meanwhile, the inheritance of Chinese culture and values essentially defined the state–university relationship (Lin & Yang, 2021), even though democratisation of university governance occurred later.

Western neoliberalism as a global cultural order and its impacts on Taiwan's HE

Neoliberalism emerged at the beginning of the Cold War and was promoted by the market-oriented reform policies of the Thatcher and Reagan governments in the 1980s. Consequently, it became the dominant paradigm of public policy in the West. The distinctive strands of neoliberalism involve two sets of claims: 'claims for the efficiency of the market as a superior allocative mechanism for the distribution of scarce public resources; and claims for the market as a morally superior form of political economy' (Peters, 2012, pp. 135–136). On the basis of these claims, agendas of marketisation, privatisation, commercialisation and corporatisation are adopted to reform public services, redefine citizenship and review the role and size of government.

HE was not exempt from the extensive influence of neoliberalism on public services and thus became market-oriented, especially in Western capitalist countries where government funding was reduced and HE was commercialised as an individualised commodity with the consequence that students were redefined as individual consumers (Marginson, 2013; Hunter, 2013). Apart from the commitment to the free market, a competitive ethos with and among individuals, departments and institutions in HE was advanced to uphold accountability in the sector. The theoretical illustration of this competitive ethos refers to managerialism, which emphasises the upholding of cost-effectiveness by creating financial incentives for individuals and organisations to compete to become more efficient. Such a managerial approach to governance altered the assessment of HE, which is now performance-based (Dougherty & Natow, 2020) and comprises sets of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002; Harvey, 2005).

Furthermore, HE internationalisation is considered a variant of neoliberalisation in some national contexts (Bamberger et al., 2019; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). According to this market-oriented approach to internationalisation, competing for a more prominent global HE market share explains why some universities and governments are keen to internationalise their policies and practices at an increasing pace. The competition for resources and prestige among

institutions and systems has intensified globally, given the emergence of a globalised environment where national borders have been broken down and ideas, people and resources have been fused. That is, this approach identifies internationalisation as an embodiment of neoliberal ideas in the global context.

Despite emerging in the West, recent literature argues that neoliberalism has become a global cultural order that substantially affects education worldwide (Lerch et al., 2022; see also Peters, 2012). Specifically, the cultural dimensions of neoliberalism encapsulate the assumptions of individuality, rationality, self-interest and the primary role of knowledge in production in the form of universalised and abstracted knowledge, which has captured the policy agenda and been the basis for structural adjustments in different education systems. Some research further notes that this global spread of neoliberalism in HE relies on international organisations (e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank), which provide countries with the impetus to reform through normative influence, rather than economic coercion (Bromley et al., 2021; Deuel, 2022). The economic rationale, which defines HE as a commodity in the international market, is less relevant to explaining HE policy in East Asia. Instead, HE development in the region is primarily grounded on late development and developmental state theories, which highlight the needs of East Asian states to catch up with advanced countries and secure their political viability as states (Green, 2013; Bamberger et al., 2019). In this sense, East Asian governments used neoliberal reforms and the concomitant process of internationalisation to introduce competitive ethos to their HE systems, thereby increasing their competitiveness and earning global recognition.

Following this discursive, developmental approach to neoliberalism, this paper identifies three aspects in which neoliberal ideas have influenced Taiwan's HE since the late 1990s. First, Taiwan adopted an elite-making policy (including the former Aim for the Top University Project and the current Global Taiwan Scheme under the Higher Education Sprout Project), aiming to develop a few selected national top universities into globally competitive universities. This elitism is in line with the competitive ethos of neoliberalism that underpins the global competition in HE and the catch-up mentality that endorses the superiority of Western HE. Thus, the narrative of HE internationalisation in Taiwan is characterised by the pursuit of Western image and quality, with which the selected universities can display their world-class attributes, earn an internationally recognised status and be competitive in the global competition for talent and resources (Lo, 2009; Hou & Cheng, 2022). Nevertheless, as Anglophone countries linguistically and culturally dominate the content of global knowledge, the initiative of pursuing a world-class image is associated with an emphasis on international outputs (e.g. publishing in English in international academic journals). This policy context justifies the rise of global university rankings in Taiwan's HE policy and university governance (Lo, 2014).

In addition to rankings, the neoliberal values of competition and the managerial approach to governance were upheld by introducing quality assurance to Taiwan's HE. Established in 2005, the Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) is an official quality assurance agency appointed by the government to conduct accreditation exercises for assessing the performance of universities (Hou, 2012). Highlighting the use of criteria and indicators, the establishment of HEEACT represents the rise of audit culture, in which data and numbers become central to upholding accountability (Shore, 2008), in Taiwan's HE.

The Taiwanese government also attempted to reform university governance structure in line with neoliberal ideas. Two reforms were proposed in 2005 and 2011, as the government intended to make public universities financially and administratively independent from the government. The first reform proposal was known as corporatisation, which focused on

changing the status of public universities into independent legal entities (Tien, 2008). The second proposal aimed to increase the elements of collaborative governance in public universities, thereby enhancing the autonomy of universities (Chen, 2015). However, both reform proposals received strong opposition and were not implemented. The unsuccessful launches of these governance reforms exemplify the resistance to neoliberal ideas in Taiwan's HE and will be further examined later in this paper.

A note on methods

The interview data reported in this paper was collected from 20 semi-structured interviews conducted between 2018 and 2020. To understand university governance in Taiwan, the researchers interviewed 15 senior administrators (including vice presidents, associate vice presidents, college deans and department heads) from four universities (two public and two private) recruited by key informant and snowball sampling methods. All the interviewees were involved in the governing bodies of their universities (i.e. university assemblies in public universities and boards of trustees in private universities).

The interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes and were run in face-to-face mode. They focused on interviewees' experience of serving as university management, power relations among different university stakeholders and negotiations among them in governance matters (i.e. financial, staffing and substantive issues). Interviewees were also asked for examples of cooperation and/or negotiation with various university governance actors related to broader cultural and political circumstances, including the prevalence of neoliberalism. In addition, four education ministry officials and a senior administrator of HEEACT were interviewed to provide insights on the relationship between the university and the government.

All interviews were transcribed and analysed for common themes, which focused on the impacts of cultural traditions and contemporary social and political changes on the coordination and allocation of power in Taiwan's university governance. Special attention was paid to the comprehension of the adoption of neoliberal values in universities.

Adoption of neoliberal values in Taiwan's HE governance

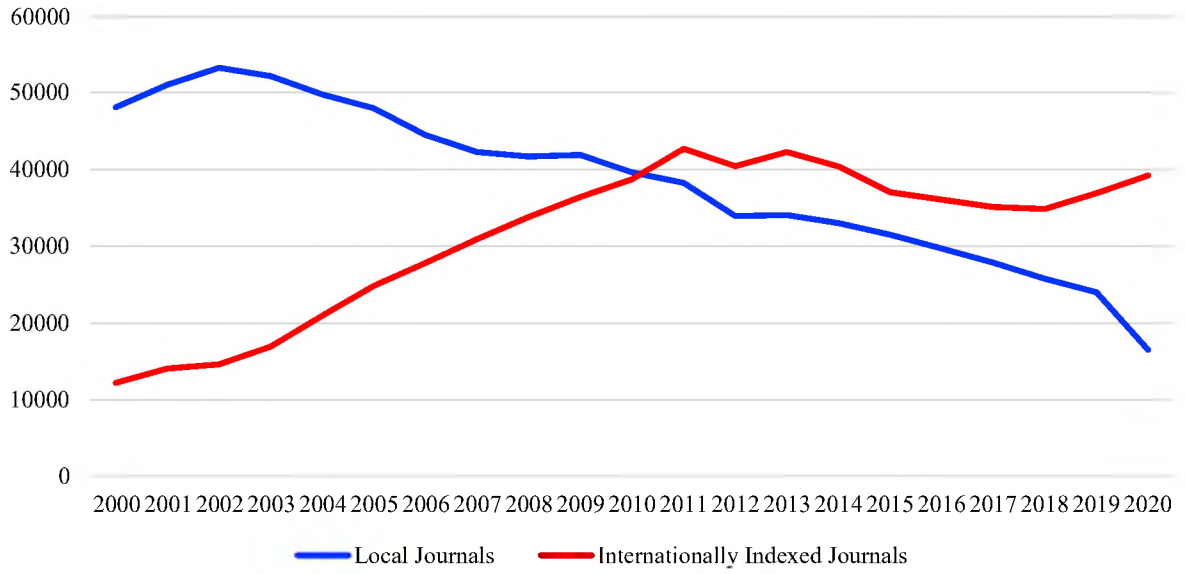
Moderating the competitive ethos

As previously mentioned, the neoliberal discourse on global competition entered Taiwan's HE and caused the prevalence of global university rankings, which provided policymakers, university leaders as well as the public with an international benchmarking tool (Zacharewicz et al., 2021). Emphasising rankings in policymaking and university governance also implied a move towards internationalisation of research, which requested academics to participate in the global competition. The Taiwanese government began to foster internationalisation in 2000 (Hou & Cheng, 2022) and launched the Aim for the Top University Project in 2006, which financially incentivised the selected universities to pursue world-class status, following the standards imposed by global ranking systems. Given its quest for complying with the standards of the Western academic model, this policy initiative of building world-class universities led to a tendency of westernisation in Taiwan's HE (Mok & Chan, 2008; Lo & Liu, 2021). Furthermore, neoliberal and managerial ideas, such as global competitiveness, international benchmarking and performance-based accountability, surrounded this policy initiative and thus substantially changed the research landscape in Taiwan's HE.

Figure 1 shows the trends in the total numbers of scholarly articles published by Taiwan's academics between 2000 and 2020. Owing to the launch of the world-class university initiative, the number of international publications grew by more than three times, from 12,221 in 2000 to 39,201 in 2020. By contrast, the number of local publications, most of which were written in Chinese, decreased significantly during the same period. In 2000, 48,047 articles were

published in local journals. However, the number dropped to 16,510 in 2020. These numbers reveal that there has been a 65% drop in local publications since the launch of the internationalisation policy. Furthermore, the figure records a more rapid decline in local publications in recent years. Thus, though the number of international publications remained steady, the gap between the numbers of international and local publications became larger.

Figure 1. Numbers of articles published by Taiwan's academics in international and local journals, 2000–2020



Source: SCImago (2021); Taiwan Local Journal Database (2014); NCL Taiwan Periodical Literature (2021).

The emphases on pursuing rankings and publishing in international journals constitute a narrative of becoming globally competitive, which was accepted by some of the interviewed senior university administrators:

> Universities need to compete in the market. They, therefore, need a reputation. Global rankings are the most objective indicator of reputation, so their prevalence is inevitable. (UA2)

> HE internationalisation is vital to universities. However, Taiwan lagged far behind the rest of East Asia on this issue. If Taiwan's universities want to be internationalised, they must pursue rankings. (UC1)

> Rankings offer a relatively objective perspective from which university leaders can make fairer decisions on resource allocation, even though rankings are imperfect. (UC3)

The world-class university initiative also led to a highly competitive environment where limited public funds were concentrated on several leading universities. Meanwhile, as an interviewee pointed out, competition among departments within these universities intensified, as the funding was open for departments to pitch (UB1). This excerpt confirmed the argument that the government's competitive funding transformed the global competition into a domestic one and caused inequality and unhealthy competition within the system (Lo, 2014). Consequently, opposing forces against the competitive and performance-based culture emerged in Taiwan's HE sector (Chou et al., 2013).

The criticism of overemphasising competition triggered the anger of academics towards HEEACT, the agency responsible for conducting quality assurance activities. A senior administrator of the council noted:

> The council was severely censured around 2010 because people believed that the council was the government's agent and was used by the authorities to pressurise the universities. (HC1)

He further associated the criticism with Taiwan's political environment:

> Taiwan's democracy was a factor affecting HE governance. The party politics encouraged the existence of different voices… Quality assurance made people voice their discontent. In this context, the Taiwan Higher Education Union was established. The union reflected university teachers' workloads and pressures in the quality assurance process. 'How can one expect a teacher who has not been doing research for decades to become research active immediately? How can one expect a teacher who does not speak English to teach in the language?' the union questioned. (HC1)

This resistance to the competitive culture explained the policy fine-tuning, which incorporated the research outputs published in quality local journals in institutional quality assurance and individual performance appraisal exercises by setting up the Taiwan Social Science Citation Index and the Taiwan Humanities Citation Index in 2000 and 2009, respectively. In 2015, the government disconnected the results of university accreditation from the allocation of funding and the quota for student admission. Thus, as the respondent from HEEACT put it, 'the council has lost its teeth since then' (HC1).

Furthermore, there was a reorientation of HE policy in the late 2010s. In 2017, the DPP government, which won the general election in 2016, launched the Higher Education Sprout Project, claiming that the project would solve the problems (i.e. inequality and homogeneity) caused by the world-class university initiative. This project emphasised the promotion of equality in HE and the role of universities in supporting the development of local communities and nurturing talents required by local economies. Thus, the project was characterised by the notions of publicness and social responsibility. It indicated that the focus of Taiwan's HE policy was shifted from participating in the global competition to promoting universities' social responsibilities. It reasserted the significant roles of national and local agendas in HE development. Literature suggests that the criticism over the elitism in HE and the associated rise of discontent caused political pressure under which the government had to change its HE policy and abandon the overemphasis on global competitiveness (Lo & Hou, 2020). In this sense, the project was a correction to the former elite-making policy and a 'doctrine of egalitarianism' against the neoliberal competitive ethos (Chang, 2021; Hou et al., 2022), though national accreditation remained important to governance at the institutional level and the pursuit of the world-class status (i.e. the Global Taiwan Scheme) continued to be a component of the Higher Education Sprout Project.

Retaining state presence and intervention

Taiwan was under authoritarian rule. Thus, universities on the island were under strict government control and lacked autonomy in various spheres, including personnel, finance and curriculum (Chan, 2010). As the island-state underwent a round of political democratisation and social liberalisation in the 1990s, governance reforms with the goals of enhancing university autonomy, protecting academic freedom, relaxing bureaucratic control and, more generally, democratising university campuses were considered a major task of HE reform during the period (Ho, 1990). In this context, the government established the Commission on Education Reform to review university governance in 1994. In 1996, the commission proposed

to corporatise public universities to make them independent legal entities, which their boards of trustees would oversee. This proposed governance model aimed to prevent political interference in university affairs and allow universities to enjoy full autonomy (Commission on Education Reform, 1996).

However, university corporatisation is also an embodiment of neoliberalism, as it removes control over universities from the state in favour of market mechanisms and brings business-like practices to the HE sector in the name of improving efficiency and effectiveness (Mintz, 2021). Such a neoliberal interpretation of corporatisation was widely circulated to and accepted by university stakeholders in Taiwan. Ironically, though the reform proposal initially aimed to democratise university campuses, critics of the proposal believed that the entrepreneurial ethos and the value of market competition promoted by corporatisation would undermine democracy, given the weakening of public supervision in the reformed governance structure. Consequently, the proposal of corporatising public universities in 2005 and the pilot scheme of autonomising public universities in 2011 met strong opposition and were abandoned (Chan et al., 2018).

The abandonment of the university corporatisation initiative made state presence remain strong in Taiwan's HE, although decentralisation occurred and allowed universities to form their governing bodies (Lo, 2010). All the senior university administrators interviewed confirmed this circumstance, though they had different views on the extent of the state intervention in university affairs. For example, an associate vice president at a public university noted:

> University teachers enjoy freedom in teaching and research and freedom of speech on campus. However, the education ministry has full control over universities' finance. As universities are financially dependent, they must meet the government's expectations. (UC3)

Other interviewees echoed this observation about the government's financial controls. A department head at another public university added:

> Although the government's support is a major source of the university's income, the university derives a significant part of its income from other sources. As the university is partially financially independent, it should be partially autonomous. Thus, further relaxation of the government controls, especially those on student admission and tuition fees, is needed. (UB1)

Interviewees from private universities noted that the government's controls over tuition fees also existed in their universities (UA1; UD1). An education ministry official confirmed the state presence in these spheres and explained the government's role and position:

> The influences of the education ministry on universities mostly appear in finance and student admission. It cannot and will not intervene in the daily operation of universities, as there are too many universities. (EM2)

He further noted:

> Private universities have their responsibility in public education. The government does not have enough resources. Thus, the private sector plays a role in HE. Meanwhile, private universities are subsidised by the government.[3] (EM2)

However, apart from finance and student admission, the interviewees also addressed the decisive role that the government played in universities' personnel matters:

> The personnel offices of public universities are part of the government. Their heads are responsible to the Directorate-General of Personnel Administration of the government rather than the university presidents. Thus, the presidents of public universities in Taiwan do not have any power in personnel matters. (UB1)

A vice president at a private university also said:

> The education ministry would ask the boards of trustees of private universities to select their presidents. However, the ministry would provide the boards with some guidelines on the selection and invite candidates whom it favours to apply for the positions. This intervention makes the selection a kind of formality. (UA2)

Concerning the criticism of the state intervention in the selection of university presidents, an education ministry official defended:

> Universities form their selection committees to select their presidents, no matter if they are public or private institutions. Two-fifths of the committee members are alumni representatives, two-fifths are community members and the education ministry appoints one-fifth. As the university management nominates the alumni representatives and community members, four-fifths of the committee members have connections with the university. (EM3)

He added:

> Before 2005, university presidents were appointed by the education ministry. Then, reforms occurred. Universities can now select their presidents. This practice applies to public and private universities. However, after over a decade of operation, we realise the shortcomings of this selection mechanism. As university members predominate the mechanism, only existing staff members of the universities are selected as presidents. (EM3)

Another official also noted controversies over the selection of university presidents. He further explained that, in the current system, the education ministry plays a supervisory role and that universities are governed under the ministry's supervision (EM2). Quoting a former education minister, he said:

> We (the education ministry) want to transform our role from supervisor to partner. However, universities must be accountable to the public. The government is accountable to the legislature. To whom are universities accountable? Who will monitor universities' performance? Inadequacy of accountability is the biggest problem in today's university governance. (EM2)

A senior official asserted that the government is not interested in interfering in university affairs. However, he noted that as universities are unaccountable for their performance, the education ministry must play a supervisory role (EM1).

These conflicting views around the state–university relationship illustrate the increasing complexity of HE governance in Taiwan. On the one hand, a competitive environment where university performance and accountability were stressed appeared due to the prevalence of neoliberalism and managerialism. On the other hand, neoliberal reforms (i.e. university corporatisation) met strong opposition from the HE sector. The strong opposing voices made the reforms infeasible, given the democratised political environment. The co-existence of these factors characterises the adoption of neoliberal ideas in Taiwan's HE and constitutes a form of multiplicity in university governance. The following section will examine this characteristic.

Multiplicity in university governance

Recent literature considers 'nested', 'sinuous' and 'continuous' forms of development and conflation of the multiple dimensions of the development as the characteristics of hybridity in university governance, which is simultaneously driven by multiple forces (Hsieh, 2022; see also Bamberger et al., 2019). This paper empirically reveals an entanglement of these various local and global driving forces and their impacts on university governance in Taiwan.

One dimension of the development is the interplay between globalisation and localisation (Law, 2002). On the one hand, neoliberalism, associated with globalisation, has transformed Taiwan's HE since the late 1990s. An awareness of the globalised environment invigorated the pursuit of global competitiveness in general and the calls for building world-class universities and pursuing global rankings and international research outputs in particular under the theme of internationalisation. Consequently, an elite-making policy (i.e. the Aim for the Top University Project), together with the prevalence of quality assurance practices (e.g. the accreditation exercises run by HEEACT), was adopted to uphold the competitive ethos of neoliberalism in Taiwan's HE.

On the other hand, the social norms and values, nurtured within the local context of political democratisation and social liberalisation, promoted civic participation and individual freedom and resulted in participatory governance in universities where collegial participation was highlighted (Chan & Yang, 2018). These values constituted a force against the top–down, universalist approach (i.e. one transplanting neoliberal and managerial practices via government policy initiatives) but favoured a bottom–up, indigenised approach (i.e. one emphasising local involvements) in governance. This perspective about the global-local dynamics articulates the tensions between the global and local dimensions of HE development and justifies the policy shift towards university social responsibility and egalitarianism in the late 2010s (i.e. the Higher Education Sprout Project) (Lo & Hou, 2020; Hou et al., 2022).

Some research associates the rise of local resistance with the growth of 'Taiwanese consciousness' (Law, 2002; Hsieh, 2020; Lo & Chan, 2020), illustrating the political dimension of the development. This literature considers the emphasis on local or indigenous cultures and identities as a Taiwanisation process, which accelerates the formation of 'national identity' and 'nationalism' within the specific political context of Taiwan. Specifically, from this perspective, Taiwanisation not only means preserving Taiwan's cultural heritage and learning the Taiwanese language and/or aboriginal dialects but also implies a form of de-Sinicisation that constitutes political resistance to the growing influence of mainland China. This articulation of the local resistance connects HE development with party politics on the island. It also offers a cultural–historical perspective from which HE development has become a part of the politics of identity formation in Taiwan.

Recent studies further conceptualise the causes of the global–local dynamics (i.e. globalisation and democratisation) as structural factors, which set the parameters for university governance in Taiwan. For example, Chan and Yang (2018) proposed a two-layered model in which neoliberalism and managerialism underpin policies and practices at the system level, and collegial participation and bureaucratic behaviours inform governance at the institutional level. In a similar vein, Hsieh (2020) believed that interplaying with party politics and demographic factors, globalisation and democratisation form the outer layer of HE policymaking in Taiwan, whereas different narratives from various actors constitute the inner layer. Then, Chan and Chou (2020) revealed the contents of this inner layer by identifying an elite approach to HE governance. Specifically, they reported that six groups of HE stakeholders (i.e. internationally renowned Taiwanese scholars, Academia Sinica affiliates, senior emeritus professors and educational officials, presidents of leading universities, university associations and HE unions), who surround the education ministry, essentially dominate decision-making processes in HE.

Despite emphasising participatory governance, the senior university administrators interviewed pointed out that position seniority mattered in many decision-making processes. For example, a department head said, 'in a university assembly meeting, I asked my dean how I should vote. My dean said I could observe how the senior management acted and I should follow' (UB2). A vice president also noted that he would avoid criticising his president (UA2). A faculty dean observed that democratisation was ineffective on Taiwan's university campuses because of the Chinese culture practice that senior management had 'the final say' (說了算) (UC4). These excerpts suggest that collegiality practices, which uphold democratic values on university campuses, are profoundly constrained by personal connections and the respect for seniority in Taiwan's cultural context.

Furthermore, the interview data presented in the preceding section demonstrate the strong state presence and intervention in Taiwan's HE sector. It resonates with the cultural perspective on HE governance, from which Confucian values are seen as a foundation of the Confucian heritage societies 'where the strong ascending drive from the nation–state with close supervision and control towards educational agendas and priorities is fundamental' (Lin, 2020, p. 219). From this cultural perspective, the strong state exemplifies cultural traditions in Taiwan, a Confucian society. Thus, the clashes between university administrators and bureaucracy can represent cultural conflicts between the Western desire for autonomy and Chinese subordination to authority (Yang, 2020).

However, given the democratisation in various social sectors in Taiwan since the late 1980s, Western concepts, such as academic freedom and university autonomy, have been indigenised and internalised through the process of campus democratisation and the practices of faculty governance and become part of the cultural traditions on the island (Chan & Yang, 2018). The appreciation, indigenisation and internalisation of these Western values essentially explains the opposition to the university corporatisation, which significantly embodies neoliberal values from the West. In this regard, despite highlighting cultural confusion and conflicts with Western values, the cultural perspective on HE governance has gone beyond the East–West dichotomy. Instead, it urges enquiries about how Confucian cultural traditions can be integrated with Western sciences into a hybrid East–West modernity and how the Confucian heritage societies can develop a governance mode that is culturally appropriate for their HE sectors and institutions (Lin, 2020; Yang, 2020; see also Marginson, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2013).

Conclusion

This paper offers an account of the interplay among various driving forces for change in Taiwan's HE. Culturally, Confucian values remain a foundation of Taiwan's society and substantially define the relationship between the state and university and the power relationship among actors in HE governance (Lin & Yang, 2021). However, as Taiwan has undergone political democratisation since the late 1980s, various types of rights and freedom have been raised in the society. In this context, non-state actors (e.g. university faculty members and students) in HE governance were significantly empowered, and the concepts of academic freedom and university autonomy were promoted, internalised and indigenised through the practices of campus democratisation and participatory governance during the political transition (Law, 1996). These cultural, historical and political factors constitute the context where neoliberal reforms occurred after 2000. Thus, though Taiwan showed an intention of adopting neoliberal policies and practices in its HE sector, resistance backed by these cultural, political and historical factors to neoliberal reforms (e.g. university corporatisation) emerged and resulted in the moderation of competitive ethos and the retention of state presence and intervention reported in this paper.

Taiwan's intention to follow global trends in HE clearly illustrates the strong influences of contemporary Western norms and values (which neoliberalism significantly shapes) on HE in the island-state and East Asia more generally (Chan, 2013). From a theoretical perspective, the resistance to neoliberalism and the resulting moderation represent a transformationalist approach to understanding the interplay between globalisation and local contexts and practices of HE governance. The entanglement of the historical, cultural and socio-political factors presented in this paper then contributes to the theoretical understanding of the HE transformation in the East Asian context (Chan et al., 2017), as it exemplifies the theoretical approach to delineating the dynamics of changing HE governance, which stresses the inclusion and conflation of the various dimensions of HE development in comprehending the notion of hybridity in HE.

Notes

1. The post-secondary colleges established during the Japanese colonial era served specific purposes and thus specialised in particular subject areas. For example, there were Taipei First Teacher School, Taipei Second Teacher School, Tainan Teacher School, Taichung Agriculture College and Tainan Engineering College, which evolved into the present-day University of Taipei, National Taipei University of Education, National Tainan University, National Chung Hsin University and National Cheng Kung University, respectively.
2. For example, National Hsing-Hua University, National Sun Yat-Sen University and National Chiao-Tung University in Taiwan were relocated from the mainland. Thus, they share the same origins as Tsinghua University, Zhongshan University and Shanghai and Xi'an Jiaotong Universities in mainland China, respectively.
3. According to interviewees, approximately 70% of the incomes of private universities is from tuition fees, 20% is from government subsidies and 10% is self-funding (including donations and government project-based competitive grants); at public universities, the proportion of self-funding reaches 50%, whereas those from government subsidies and tuition fees are 30% and 20%, respectively.

Funding

Work on the paper was partially supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council (Project No. 18606017) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China.

References

Bamberger, A., Morris, P., & Yemini, M. (2019). Neoliberalism, internationalisation and higher education: connections, contradictions and alternatives. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 40(2), 203–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2019.1569879

Bromley, P., Overbey, L., Furuta, J., & Kijima, R. (2021). Education reform in the twenty-first century: Declining emphases in international organisation reports, 1998–2018. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 19(1), 23–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1816159

Chan, S. J. (2010). Shifting governance patterns in Taiwanese higher education: A recentralized future? In K. H. Mok (Ed.), *The search for new governance of higher education in Asia* (pp. 139–152). Palgrave Macmillan.

Chan, S. J. (2013). Between the East and the West: Challenges for internationalizing higher education in East Asia. In D. Neubauer, J. C. Shin, & J. N. Hawkins (Eds.), *The dynamics of higher education development in East Asia: Asian cultural heritage, western dominance, economic development, and globalization* (pp. 29–49). Palgrave Macmillan.

Chan, S. J., & Chou, C. (2020). Who influences higher education decision-making in Taiwan? An analysis of internal stakeholders. *Studies in Higher Education, 45*(10), 2101–2109. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1823646

Chan, S. J., Lee, M. N. N., & Yang, R. (2017). The hybrid university in East Asia: Searching for the new paradigm. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(10), 1803–1808. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1376876

Chan, S. J., & Yang, C. Y. (2018). Governance styles in Taiwanese universities: Features and effects. *International Journal of Educational Development, 63*, 29–35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.10.007

Chan, S. J., Yang, C. Y., & Liu, H. H. (2018). Taiwanese struggle in university governance reforms: The case of incorporatization. In J. C. Shin (Ed.), *Higher education governance in East Asia* (pp. 73–88). Springer.

Chang, D. F. (2021). Taiwan's higher education policy: From neoliberalism to public goods. In A. Y. C. Hou, T. L. Chiang, & S. J. Chan (Eds.), *Higher education in Taiwan: Global, political and social challenges and future trends* (pp. 49–63). Springer.

Chen, Y. H. (2015). Probing into the implementation of national university governance and autonomy pilot program from perspective of collaborative governance. *Journal of Educational Research and Development, 11*(3): 31-54. https://doi.org/10.3966/181665042015091103002

Ching, L. T. S. (2001). *Becoming Japanese colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation*. University of California Press.

Chou, C. P., Lin, H. F., & Chiu, Y. C. (2013). The impact of SSCI & SCI on Taiwan's academy: An outcry for fair play. *Asian Pacific Education Review, 14*, 23–31. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-013-9245-1

Commission on Education Reform. (1996). *General Consultation Report on Educational Reform*. The Executive Yuan. [In Chinese].

de Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2021). Internationalization in higher education: Global trends and recommendations for its future. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education, 5*(1), 28–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1820898

Deuel, R. P. (2022). Governing higher education toward neoliberal governmentality: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of global policy agendas. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 20*(3), 310–323. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2021.1897000

Dougherty, K. J., & Natow, R. S. (2020). Performance-based funding for higher education: How well does neoliberal theory capture neoliberal practice?. *Higher Education, 80*(3), 457–478. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00491-4

Green, A. (2013). *Education and state formation: Europe, East Asia and the USA* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Harvey, L. (2005). A history and critique of quality evaluation in the UK. *Quality Assurance in Education, 13*(4), 263–276. https://doi.org/10.1108/09684880510700608

Hawkins, J. N., Deane, N., & Shin, J. C. (2013). Conclusion: Is there an Asian hybrid university? In N. Deane, J. C. Shin, & J. N. Hawkins (Eds.), *The dynamics of higher Education development in East Asia: Asian cultural heritage, western dominance, economic development, and globalization* (pp. 197–208). Palgrave Macmillan.

Ho, D. F. (1990). *The rebirth of university*. China Times Press. [In Chinese].

Hou, A. Y. C. (2012). Impact of excellence programs on Taiwan higher education in terms of quality assurance and academic excellence, examining the conflicting role of Taiwan's accrediting agencies. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 13*, 77–88. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-011-9181-x

Hou, A. Y. C., Hill, C., Hu, Z., & Lin, L. (2022). What is driving Taiwan government for policy change in higher education after the year of 2016 – In search of egalitarianism or pursuit of academic excellence?. *Studies in Higher Education, 47*(2), 338–351. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1744126

Hou, Y. W., & Cheng, K. S. Y. (2022). Opportunities and challenges under globalization on the higher education reforms in Taiwan from 2000 to the present. In J. Zajda, & W. J. Jacob (Eds.), *Discourses of globalisation and higher education reforms* (pp. 179–195). Springer.

Hsieh, C. C. (2020). Internationalization of higher education in the crucible: Linking. national identity and policy in the age of globalization. *International Journal of Educational Development, 78*, 102245. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102245

Hunter, C. P. (2013). Shifting themes in OECD country reviews of higher education. *Higher Education, 66*(6), 707–723. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9630-z

Law, W. W. (1996). The Taiwanisation, democratisation and internationalisation of higher education in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 16*(1), 56–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188799608542611

Law, W. W. (2002). Education reform in Taiwan: A search for a 'national' identity through democratisation and Taiwanisation. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 32*(1), 61–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920120116535

Lerch, J. C., Bromley, P., & Meyer, J. W. (2022). Global neoliberalism as a cultural order and its expansive educational effects. *International Journal of Sociology, 52*(2), 97–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2021.2015665

Li, Y. H. (2005). *Taiwan education history in the Japanese colonial period*. National Institute for Translation and Compilation. [In Chinese].

Lin, W. (2020). Taiwanese higher education in a cultural perspective: a preliminary study of two premier universities. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 40*(2), 212–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2019.1690424

Lin W., & Yang, R. (2021). Centralising, decentralising, and recentralising: a case study of the university-government relationship in Taiwan. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 43*(1), 67–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2020.1724599

Lin, Y. T. (2003). *Taiwan education history*. Win Join Book Company. [In Chinese].

Lo, W. Y. W. (2009). Reflections on internationalisation of higher education in Taiwan: Perspectives and prospects. *Higher Education*, 58(6), 733–745. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9209-x

Lo, W. Y. W. (2010). Decentralization of higher education and its implications for educational autonomy in Taiwan. *Asian Pacific Journal of Education, 30*(2), 127–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791003721572

Lo, W. Y. W. (2014). *University rankings: Implications for higher education in Taiwan*. Springer.

Lo, W. Y. W. & Chan, S. J. (2020). Globalism, regionalism and nationalism: The dynamics of student mobility in higher education across the Taiwan strait. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 41*(4): 587–603. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2018.1516198

Lo, W. Y. W., & Hou, A. Y. C. (2020). A farewell to internationalisation? Striking a balance between global ambition and local needs in higher education in Taiwan. *Higher Education, 80*(3), 497–510. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00495-0

Lo, W. Y. W., & Liu, S. (2021). Are university rankings still important? Perspectives from Greater China. In E. Hazelkorn, & G. Mihut (Eds.), *Research handbook on university rankings: Theory, methodology, influence and impact* (pp. 278–293). Edward Elgar.

Marginson, S. (2011). Higher education in East Asia and Singapore: Rise of the Confucian model. *Higher Education, 61*(5), 587–611. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9384-9

Marginson, S. (2013). The impossibility of capitalist markets in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy, 28*(3), 353–370. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2012.747109

Marginson, S. (2022). Globalization in higher education: The good the bad, the ugly. In F. Rizvi, B. Lingard, & R. Rinne (Eds.), *Reimagining globalization and education* (pp. 11–31). Routledge.

Mintz, B. (2021). Neoliberalism and the crisis in higher education: The cost of ideology. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 80*(1), 79–112. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12370

Mok, K. H., & Chan, Y. (2008). International Benchmarking with the Best Universities: Policy and Practice in Mainland China and Taiwan. *Higher Education Policy*, *21*, 469–486. https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2008.21

Morris, A. (2002). The Taiwan Republic of 1895 and the failure of the Qing modernizing project. In S. Corcuff (Ed.), *Memories of the future: National identity issues and the search for a new Taiwan* (pp. 3–24) . M. E. Sharpe.

National Central Library (NCL) Taiwan periodical literature. (2021). *Literature search result: 2013–2020*. Retrieved (May 23 2022), from https://tpl.ncl.edu.tw/NclService/JournalQuery

Peters, M. A. (2012). Neoliberalism, education and the crisis of western capitalism. *Policy Futures in Education, 10*(2), 134–141. https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2012.10.2.134

Research Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Ministry of Science and Technology. (2022). *Journal evaluation and core journals list*. Retrieved (May 23 2022), from http://www.hss.ntu.edu.tw/en/model.aspx?no=497

Rhoades R., & Sporn, B. (2002). Quality assurance in Europe and the U.S.: Professional and political economic framing of higher education policy. *Higher Education, 43*(3), 355–390. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014659908601

SCImago (2021). *SJR-SCImago journal & country rank: Taiwan*. Retrieved (May 23 2022), from https://www.scimagojr.com/countrysearch.php?country=TW

Shore, C. (2008). Audit culture and illiberal governance: Universities and the politics of accountability. *Anthropological Theory, 8*(3), 278–298. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499608093815

Taiwan Local Journal Database. (2014). *Literature search result: 1996–2012*. Retrieved (May 23 2022), from https://tpl.ncl.edu.tw/NclService/JournalQuery

Tien, F. F. (2008). Incorporation of national universities in Taiwan: Challenges for the government and the academics. *Policy Future in Education, 6*(5), 616–628. https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2008.6.5.616

Tsurumi, E. P. (1979). Education and assimilation in Taiwan under Japanese rule, 1895–1945. *Modern Asian Studies, 13*(4), 617–641. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00008489

Wu, W. H., Chen, S. F., & Wu, C. T. (1989). The development of higher education in Taiwan. *Higher Education 18*(1), 117–136. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00138963

Yang, R. (2013). Indigenizing the western concept of university: The Chinese experience. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 14*(1), 85–92. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-013-9254-0

Yang, R. (2020). Political culture and higher education governance in Chinese societies: Some reflections. *Frontiers of Education in China, 15*(2), 187–221. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11516-020-0010-z

Yang, S. K. (Ed.). (1999). *Educational sciences: Internationalization and indigenization*. Yang Chih Book Company. [In Chinese].

Yeh, C. J. (1993). Indigenization of academic research. *Indigenous Psychology, 1*, 184–192. [In Chinese].

Zacharewicz, T., Jonkers, K., & Hazelkorn, E. (2021). Are global rankings compatible with higher education policy?. In E, Hazelkorn, & G. Mihut (Eds.), *Research handbook on university rankings: Theory, methodology, influence and impact* (pp. 509–523). Edward Elgar.