

DOCTORAL THESIS

Geographies of higher education precarity in Hong Kong

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Abstract

In shaping Hong Kong into an international education hub and in offering hope to youth and the promise of social mobility, talent development is a major priority of the Hong Kong Government. Since the 2000s, associate degrees (ADs) have been mandated to fulfill this promise through increasing higher education access – that is, to raise the post-secondary education participation rate to 60% or above. Given the mandate and insufficient genuine governmental support, this thesis argues that AD students of the self-financed sector experience precarity beyond education, underpinned by higher education marketization and chronopolitics. Drawing upon geography of precarity and life course studies, and using a mixed method of data collection including interviews, group discussions, diary studies, social media and participant observation, and grounded theory, the research explores the AD youth cohort’s multidimensional everyday life precarity. This thesis builds a ‘precarity over the life course’ conceptual framework that can contribute to the geographies of higher education and wider research fields such as eldercare.

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