Mainland Chinese students at an elite Hong Kong university: Habitus–field disjuncture in a transborder context

Dr Cora Lingling Xu
School of Social Science and Public Policy
Keele University, UK

December 16, 2016 (Friday)
16:45 – 18:00
Room 204, Runme Shaw Building, HKU
Chair: Dr Andy Gao

Abstract:
Drawing on in-depth interview data from 49 mainland Chinese (MLC) students in a Hong Kong university, this paper conceptualises MLC and Hong Kong higher education as two dissonant but interrelated subfields of the Chinese higher education field. The paper argues that these MLC students’ habitus, one that possesses rich economic, social and cultural capital, prompts a strong sense of entitlement to anticipated privileges. However, this sense of entitlement is disrupted by the differential capital valuations across these fields. There is thus notable habitus–field disjuncture, which, exacerbated by the hysteresis effect, gives rise to a sense of disappointment and ambivalence. This paper demonstrates how the Hong Kong education credential, which these students initially set out to pursue as a form of capital, can become a disadvantage at multiple levels; the paper illustrates that capital valuation and conversion in a transborder context is not a straightforward, but rather a complicated and sometimes contradictory, process.

About the speaker:
Cora Lingling Xu is a Lecturer in Education, School of Social Science and Public Policy, Keele University since September 2016. She received her PhD in Sociology of Education from the University of Cambridge in July 2016, as a Cambridge Trust scholar. She obtained her MA from King’s College London as a British Chevening scholar and her Bachelor’s from the Education University of Hong Kong as an Outstanding Mainland scholar. A qualified teacher, she taught English as a second language for five years in two Hong Kong secondary schools. She also served on the editorial board of Journal of Trainee Teacher Educational Research between 2012 and 2016.