



Research Integrity and Political Neutrality

Professor Kevin Kester

Associate Professor of Comparative International
Education and Peace/Development Studies
Seoul National University



June 10, 2026 (Wednesday)

17:00 - 18:15

Room 408-410, Meng Wah Complex, HKU

Chair: Professor Liz Jackson

ABSTRACT:

While often seen as an important aspect of research integrity, political neutrality is a challenging issue for many scholars in education as education is a political and social practice. Navigating political neutrality expectations is particularly important when conducting research in conflict areas, in comparative education, in peace and development studies, and in contexts where academic censorship may arise. This seminar will help diverse colleagues consider how to respond to these challenges as they pertain to practicing research integrity when working across diverse world regions. Specifically, research integrity -- especially in conflict zones -- extends beyond checklist-style ethics and standardized procedures toward a more intimate and context-sensitive practice. The session will question static ethics protocols and propose a 'four Rs' framework (reflexivity, relationality, responsiveness, reciprocity) as a grounded approach to research integrity. The session will be geared to students and staff at different levels and encourage interactive engagement.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER:

Kevin Kester is Associate Professor of Comparative International Education and Peace/Development Studies at Seoul National University (서울대학교), where he directs the Education, Conflict and Peace Lab. His research examines educational responses to conflict, peacebuilding, and development in local and global contexts, with a particular focus on higher education in conflict-affected societies. He completed his PhD and postdoctoral studies at the University of Cambridge and previously served as Director of Studies for Education at Queens' College and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. He is the author and editor of numerous books and special issues, including *Conflict, Peace and Teaching in Higher Education* (2026), *A Modern Guide to Education in East Asia* (2026), *Revisiting 'Asia as Method' in Education Research* (2023), *Common Curriculum Guide for Peace Education in Northeast Asia* (2023), and *The United Nations and Higher Education* (2020). He currently serves as Editor of *Asia Pacific Education Review* and Executive Editor of *Teaching in Higher Education*, alongside editorial and advisory roles in several international academic organizations. His current research is funded by the National Research Foundation of Korea and the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies. He is recipient of the 2024 Noam Chomsky Shining Star Research Award and the 2022 Unju Prize for Research Excellence.

