

CHER 28th Annual Conference

Panel Proposal

*Note: Please fill in the information between squared brackets []. Delete when not applicable.
This whole document should not have more than 500 words.*

Higher Education in Times of Political Crises: Before and After the Revolution of Dignity

Track [T3]

Dr. Anatoly Oleksiyenko, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

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Presentation of the topic:

This panel would explore the roles played by academics and students in defending civil society values in times of political crises. Recent events in Ukraine offer a remarkable opportunity to explore how neglect of civic demands and failure to address escalating corruption can lead to political upheaval and urge intellectuals to engage in acts of defiance, followed by organized resistance, and even violent confrontation. The Ukrainian academic world underwent complicated changes in the decade between the mass civic actions of 2004 and 2014. Failures of the 2004 Orange Revolution created a sense of disillusionment and political apathy within Ukrainian society, and among students in particular, facilitating the entrenchment of a kleptocratic, bureaucratic and repressive government. In 2014, however, large numbers of students and professors rose up against the regime, notwithstanding the threat of a violent crackdown by state forces. Ironically, even though the academe had been a major generator of corruption in the country, the 2014 Revolution of Dignity proved that academic communities could muster a sufficient degree of accumulated moral authority to become guardians of a burgeoning civil society, which was under assault by the corrupt state.

The papers in this issue will consider the sources of institutional and behavioral powers that shaped civic positions in academic communities in the period leading up to political upheaval, as well as in the midst of the crisis. The contributing scholars will examine epistemic, organizational and cultural forces in the post-colonial higher education context, and explore the dilemmas of compliance versus defiance in the new nation-state. The Ukrainian case will provide a gamut of cultural and political perspectives on what it really means to form intellectual resistance among professors and students in a country that is being transformed into a police state, and in which neo-colonization is employed to quash civic aspirations for liberty and human rights.

In view of the major reforms anticipated in the aftermath of the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, and with regard to the legacies of failure by the "Orange" government brought to power by the 2004 post-electoral uprising, this special issue will also focus on what it means for universities to take responsibility for social progress after a transformative political crisis. How can universities contribute to urgently-needed political and economic reforms in the country, while struggling with legacies of bureaucratic governance, academic inbreeding, corruption and mistrust? How can universities overcome parochial post-Soviet thinking and practices, so as to accommodate a rapid transition to European modes of production, productivity, competition, etc.? As Ukraine battles an unconventional war with Russia that includes cyber attacks, informational warfare, financial warfare, and terrorism, how can local universities address security and international counterterrorism challenges without compromising academic freedom, creativity and innovation? What are the new roles of local higher education institutions in preventing the mistakes and failures of the seemingly reform-oriented and determined Orange revolutionaries? What lessons can other higher education systems learn from Ukraine's experience?

The panel presenters will comprise researchers from Kyiv (Drs. Volodymyr Satsyk, Andreas Umland, Mykhailo Wynnicky), Hong Kong (Dr. Anatoly Oleksiyenko), and will help to better conceptualize and analyze the forces of intellectual defiance within highly bureaucratic higher education systems, as well as inform further research on political crises and liberation movements in higher education.

Keywords: academic communities, student movement, political crisis, higher education reforms, compliance and defiance

Biographical Details:

Dr. Anatoly Oleksiyenko is Assistant Professor of Higher Education at the University of Hong Kong. He was born in Ukraine, and educated in the former Soviet Union, UK and Canada. He holds his PhD in Higher Education Theory and Policy Studies from the University of Toronto. His research is focused on the changes of university governance in the international higher education. Over the last five years, he examined transformations in academic organizations, cultures, epistemic norms and internationalization strategies across research university contexts in Canada, USA, China, Russia, Hong Kong and Ukraine. He has discussed the results of his studies in such journals as *Higher Education*, *Studies in Higher Education*, *Higher Education Policy*, *Minerva* and *Comparative Education Research*, among others.