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### Biography

Dr. Kun DAI is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Educational Administration and Policy, Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Dr Dai's research interests include international and comparative education, transnational higher education, higher education policy, and international student/academic mobility. Dr Dai's work has appeared in several international peer-reviewed journals, such as *Studies in Higher Education*, *Higher Education*, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *Higher Education Research & Development*, and *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. He is the (co)authors of four books, including 'Transitioning 'In-Between' Chinese Students' Navigating Experiences in Transnational Higher Education Programmes' (2021 Brill), 'Developing intercultural competence 'at home': Domestic students' experiences in Chinese universities' (2023 Routledge), 'Motivation and experiences of international doctoral students in China: Navigating the PhD journey' (forthcoming in 2024 Routledge), and 'Mapping transnational habitus: Epistemology, Theory, and Boundaries.' (forthcoming in 2024 Palgrave Macmillan). Dr Dai is an associate editor of the *Journal of International Students and Higher Education Research & Development*. He is also an editorial board member of *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* and the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Meanwhile, he serves as a referee for Routledge, Springer, Bloomsbury and more than 50 international journals.

### Title:

**WeChatting becomes a digital learning habitus: Understanding international students' experiences in China**

### Abstract

Digital media has been increasingly incorporated into the transitioning experiences of international students studying abroad. While many studies explored the role of social media in international students' sociocultural transition, few sought to understand their digital transition in the academic setting, especially foreign international students' academic adaptation to WeChat as a learning practice in China. Utilising Bourdieu's thinking tools, this study aims to understand the role of WeChat in international students' learning and their perceptions of WeChat-mediated learning journey in China. Findings show that WeChatting has become an essential strategy in international students' everyday learning practices, which shape their digital learning habitus and help them develop digital capital with a sense of in-betweenness. While WeChat is used to support their everyday learning activities, students learn to shift between different WeChat functions, between WeChat and international apps, and between languages to navigate the Chinese digital field. As such, they constantly (re)shape their digital learning habitus to transition between different virtual contexts. However, the WeChat mixture may also position students in an in-between digital field with a sense of disempowerment, as the switching in-between practices can be chaotic sometimes. This study contributes to existing literature about international students' learning and adaptation issues in the Chinese context, offers implications for institutional support of international students' digital transition in China, and provides insights for other higher education contexts.