Challenges of Collective Inertia and Scarcity to Technological and Vocational Education Universities

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Abstract: The massification of higher education institutions in Taiwan, typically in universities of science and technology, creates competition for resources and currently threatens foreclosures in Taiwan's higher education system. To answer this challenge amid global competition among universities, the Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented the World-Class Research University Project, creating the initiative for higher education institutions to quickly gain world-class status with the reasonable belief that strong global visibility would attract much needed international resources to supplement local ones. However, the race for global reputation has created highly stressful environments for faculty members to publish research papers in highly regarded international journals. In highlighting fundamental paradoxes of the system and the rationale behind them, this paper attempts to stimulate a much-needed reflection that might pave the way for rational and empirical efforts to transform higher education in Taiwan. This paper also reveals that the emphasis on speed-up achievement has overwhelmed the original academic missions of higher education and placed academics in a scarcity mindset with quantity drowning essence. The primary mechanism for keeping the current system is the collective inertia that limits academics from breaking out of the mould of habitual approaches. This paper discusses all sorts of findings, reported events, theoretical ideas, and inherent contradictions in relation to Taiwan universities in an attempt to frame the essential background on the problems in terms of scarcity mindset and inertial thinking. Finally, the paper provides some suggested solutions. The reflection in this paper may inspire faculty members in higher technological and vocational education programs to lead school administration and industry development with practical and updated knowledge. It is crucial to revitalising faculty members' educational enthusiasm through building professional autonomy and self-efficacy.

Keywords: Professional autonomy, scarcity mindset, self-efficacy, collective inertia, habitual behaviour

1. Introduction

Higher technological and vocational education, as an essential part of the Asian higher education system, historically has played a significant contributor to human resources and industrial's growth and development. Nowadays, both the higher technological and vocational education and higher education in general face inevitable pressure to globalise and

internationalise their educational contents and academic performance due to the increasing competition of global economic and higher education world ranking. This international competition stimulated Asian countries to initiate some incentive policies and projects, such as 'Project 211' and 'Project 985' in China (Jiang et al., 2020), 'Brain Korea 21 Project' in South Korea (Shin, 2009), 'Global 30 Program' in Japan (Aleles, 2015) in Japan, 'World Class Higher Education Project' in Malaysia (Sirat, 2013) and the newest project in Taiwan namely 'Higher Education Sprout Project' (MOE, 2017).

Globalisation has empirically created paradoxical consequences that either place Asian higher educations in the global market competition or lead higher education to westernisation (Shreeve, 2020). Furthermore, higher education globalisation policies have also created some phenomena such as the 'Publishing globally or perishing locally' syndrome (Colpaert, 2012), the SSCI syndrome among faculty members (Chou, 2014), and the overemphasis on quantitative achievements as an indicator of world-class higher education (Lo & Hou, 2020). The core values and original missions of higher education seemed to be ignored.

In Taiwan, educational reformation starting in the mid-1990s led to higher education massification, which gave rise to the emergence of a great number of higher education institutions. In 2010, this country, having only 36,193 km² with 23 million people, expanded its higher education to 163 institutions, including 15 junior colleges, 77 universities of science and technology and 71 universities (MOE, 2011). The rapid expansion in the number of higher education institutions subsequently created a competition for resources, notably students, but the extreme shortage of local resources, which finally threatened foreclosures and a deep crisis in its higher education system, then forced the ministry into quickly implementing the World-Class Research University Project (Mok, 2014). This initiative pushed higher education institutions to quickly gain world-class status, with the reasonable belief that strong global visibility would attract much needed international resources to supplement local ones. Consequently, the competition for resources has become fiercer in terms of top students and faculties, government funding and industry projects. Furthermore, the global ranking and international accreditation system that emphasises producing more research and published articles have led to enormous pressures (Chou & Chan, 2017). The balancing of academics' duties on teaching, research and service has been jeopardised.

The race for global reputation simultaneously has created heavily stressful environments for faculty members to pursue this numerical achievement of publications in highly regarded international journals, primarily determining their tenure and promotion. It has alienated value from reality by imperceptibly diverting their attention away from essence and turning them into paper producing machines. However, the reality has a way of catching up with the numbers, so that eventually, the contradiction between the two is so big that they are forced to recognise they are in a system that now staggers and falters on various points. The focus of Taiwan academics in the number of research articles has graven repercussions to research efforts, students and communities (Yang, 2017). Typically, the researches in higher technological and vocational education institutions that were supposed to address practical problems in industries and communities specifically, subsequently, incarnated as production wheel of numbers: number of books, number of conferences, but most importantly, number of publications and number of citations predominate (Harwood, 2010).

Along with research pressure, the pursuit of quantity in publications also threatens academics' psychological health and responsibility to their students. Higher technological and vocational education established for career-based technical education and skill development aims to transform students into active, ambitious, creative and talented professionals. However, academics intentionally or unintentionally abandon students' best interests, inevitably creating widespread feelings of insecurity and unpreparedness among students (Chang & Yeh, 2012; Huang et al., 2015). The communities also pay a considerable price as academics focus on getting the job done quickly and out of the way. They spend less time with communities and subject them to inadequate programs, not to mention overarching theories and models that ignore difference, prevent creativity and create only narrow ways of viewing the world (Teichler, 2013).

It is time to take a full systematic account of the fundamental paradoxes of the higher education system. Although this article only discusses Taiwan's higher education, it can be a reflection of Asian higher education in general, particularly in the context of technological and vocational education, where a significant number of institutes are intensely pursuing international reputation. Our paper attempts to present a portrait of faculty development to recover the essence of research, teaching and service. Essentially, the researchers hope that the paper stimulates reflection and empirical and rational efforts aimed at deconstructing and salvaging higher education to enable academics to pursue truth, profess the truth, and put it to use in communities with the hope of protecting and preserving life.

2. Research Methods

This research adopts a literature analysis approach to scrutinise the chase for international status amid limited resources and then the consequent to the academics' psychological problems. The discussion draws on all sorts of findings, reported events, theoretical ideas and inherent contradictions to frame the paper's main ideas. This article begins with Taiwan's higher education background leading to academics' psychological problems and then discusses academics' solutions to break it down.

Table 1 - A List of the article on the topic of Taiwan Higher Education Policies

No	Author	Title
1.	Chou and Chan (2016)	Trends in publication in the race for World-Class University: The case of Taiwan
2.	Chan and Yang (2018)	Governance styles in Taiwanese universities: Features and effects
3.	Chang and Lin (2018)	Applying CIPO indicators to examine internationalization in higher education institutions in Taiwan
4.	Jacob et al., (2018)	Changes in Chinese higher education: Financial trends in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan
5.	Hou et al., (2018)	The implementation of self-accreditation policy in Taiwan higher education and its challenges to university internal quality assurance capacity building
6.	Tang (2019a)	To be a first-class department in a first-class university: Perceived effects of a world-class initiative in two departments in a Taiwanese university
7.	Tang (2019b)	Creating a picture of the world class university in Taiwan: a Foucauldian analysis
8.	Chan and Chou (2020)	Who influences higher education decision-making in Taiwan? An analysis of internal stakeholders
9.	Chan et al., (2020)	Knowledge production and internationalisation of research in Taiwan: a new watershed?
10.	Hou et al., (2020)	What is driving Taiwan government for policy change in higher education after the year of 2016-in search of egalitarianism or pursuit of academic excellence?
11.	Hsieh (2020)	Internationalization of higher education in the crucible: Linking national identity and policy in the age of globalization
12.	Hsu (2019)	The evolution of quality assurance in higher education in Taiwan: The changes and the effects at different levels
13.	Lin and Yang (2021)	Centralising, decentralising, and recentralising: A case study of the university-government relationship in Taiwan.
14.	Lo et al., (2020)	A farewell to internationalisation? Striking a balance between global ambition and local needs in higher education in Taiwan
15.	Shin et al., (2020)	Institutionalization of competition-based funding under neoliberalism in East Asia

The authors initially reviewed the related articles to understand Taiwan's higher education policy of World-Class Research University Project to show how this policy created highly stressful environments for faculty members. The articles on educational research were searched on the Web of Science under the topic keyword "Taiwan higher education policy", which have the following categories: written in English, peer-reviewed articles, and published between 2016 and 2021. The year after 2016 was selected because this was the beginning of the egalitarianism policy's implementation, replacing the excellence and quality assurance policy. The primary identification of literature search has identified 43 articles. However, 28 articles have been excluded as the targeting article because the participants were not faculty members. The fifteen selected articles, as shown in Table 1, along with the data from the Taiwan ministry of education and related news articles, were further analysed using natural flexibility approaches. Finally, the authors' reflection and in-depth discussion on this topic generate meaningful solutions for these circumstances.

3. The Related Policies as a Background that Leading to Academics' Psychological Problems

Hou and Colleagues (2020), in their article, noted about Taiwan higher education's five developmental stages and contexts: the colonial period in Japanese rule, the state control and educational reform from 1950 to 1985, expansion and regulation era from 1986 to 2005, the excellence and quality assurance from 2005-2016 and the most recently the egalitarianism in 2016 until the present. The expansion era and the excellence and quality assurance policies will be presented as a background that leads to academics' psychological problems.

3.1 The Rapid Development and Consequences of Higher Education in Taiwan

Specifically, starting from the mid-1990s, Taiwan's higher education system experienced a ground-breaking development. The Ministry of Education (MOE) initiated policies that revised the higher education law and established the Executive Yuan Education Reform Commission (Chan & Yang, 2018). Fundamentally, the MOE aimed to move higher education institutes away from the centralised control to deregulate, decentralise, democratise and internationalise (Lin & Yang, 2021). The MOE purported to liberalise the higher education market and bring the principles of free trade and competition. Free market policies inevitably led to rapid expansion and activity, noticeably establishing more higher

education institutions from the number 130 in 1994 to 1634 in 2007 (MOE, 2019) that exceed the supply over the demand. The rapid development meant that higher education had to engage in an untamed competition for limited resources, including students, government funding, industry projects and renowned faculty.

One statistic that reflected limited resources for higher education in Taiwan is the low birth rate. The declining birth rate from over 2 in 1984 to recently become 1, creating population figures hardly enough to replenish many higher educations with sufficient students for years to come (Hsueh, 2018). Taiwanese higher education geared up against each other to reach student quotas and secure their development in other ways. Consequently, some policies that lead to higher education mergers or closures cannot be avoided (Chan & Chou, 2020).

While the birth rate has been disparaging today, another disconcerting fact for higher education has been the exodus of businesses and talents to countries abroad, primarily China. In between 2010 and 2013, Taiwanese' foreign direct investment (FDI) -as one indicator of economic growth- to China became the highest leading supplier that surpassed Singapore, Japan and even the United States (Chen, 2014). Moreover, statistics on talent flow show a preference for overseas countries, not surprisingly, mainly also to China. According to the Taiwan Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (Denyer, 2018), among Taiwan's 11 million workforces, 720,000 work overseas that more than half of them in China. The attractive salary overseas is become the main reason for this brain drain.

Such a sizeable outward flow of businesses and talent has reduced economic activity and created a low investment environment. It has punctured a big hole in the market's dynamism for higher education to gain private industry and professionals' support at home.

3. 2   The World-Class Research University Project

To offset some of the effects of environmental challenges, the MOE initiated necessary actions as early as 2003 by starting the promotion project of the world-class higher research university and then in 2005, the 'Higher Education for Excellence' plan was initiated. This project funding was allocated for the twelve higher education institutions up to NT$5 billion over five years (Shin et al., 2020). Consequently, the top higher education institutions in Taiwan have been chasing after research grants and high research output in top international journals, playing the number game.

The emphasis on quantity future achievements regarding research grants and papers have changed the role of academics. Far from being the embodiment of truth and service, it turned academics into a salesperson desperately chasing figures as they searched for journals to accept their articles. These 'entrepreneurial professors' who have drawn admirers and investors boded well for the university management as they are concerned with elevating the university's status (Jacob, 2018). However, it did not favour those who are led, who see altruism, ethical behaviour, low conceit and other characteristics as necessary for the professor to possess. The world-class higher education research project aimed to elevate higher education's status to attract more students, notable faculty and presumably cooperation with more industries (Chang and Lin, 2018). Naturally, in the quest for quantity over quality, status over character, those being led by academics-students, the community and everyone else were sacrificed. In truth, the academics themselves were also sacrificed.

This intense competition for resources may lead to academic beginning their earlier transition to become 'entrepreneur' (Mohamad et al., 2021). Moreover, the MOE's plan to elevate higher education's international status on global ranking systems, attach performance evaluation and funding to these criteria took in whole organisations. It restructured management and thrust every academic into the role, paper-pushing entrepreneur. Notwithstanding the above, the project seemed to have borne some necessary achievements for the MOE. By 2009, according to QS World University Rankings, Taiwan's premier higher education, National Taiwan University, achieved ranking among the top one hundred higher education institutions in the world (QS world university rankings, 2009). In 2021, Taiwan higher education successively brings in 12 institutions, including two higher technological and vocational education institutions (National Taiwan University of Science and Technology and National Taipei University of Technology) in the world's top 500 higher education institutions (QS world university rankings, 2021).

These developments appear noteworthy, but, as mentioned earlier, they came at a huge cost. In trying to deal with environmental constraints, the MOE's pursuit of world-class higher education caused it to play itself into the hands of global ranking systems and accreditation associations, which today fashion Taiwan higher education under the stranglehold of the numbers system. The damage that has been done to higher education culture is shocking. The academics realised these crises and raised some criticisms to the 10-year implementation of national excellence initiatives and quality policies, such as overemphasising facilities for world-class institutions, inequality among higher education institutions and tighter government control (Hou, 2012; Mok et al., 2013). The higher education administrators and faculty members complained about their heavy workload and stressed by the tally accreditation (Hou et al., 2018). In 2016, the Taiwan government tried to answer these problems by launching the Higher Education Sprout Project (HESP) project (MOE, 2017). This project aims to reorient and recalibrate the higher education policy. The former project built the elitism while the new project more to egalitarianism. Studies (Hou et al., 2020; Tang, 2019a) argued that the most recent Taiwan government's policy led to significant findings: The higher education leaders continued to use national accreditation rather than to take the option of a self-accreditation and; Taiwan higher education showed the declining of global competitiveness.

The problems remain when one considers the effects of the evaluation index that primarily involves tallying the number of publications in select international research databases. Academic have imperceptibly diverted their attention

to paper production rather than focusing on realistic contributions to their field and society's development. Under the pressure of meeting numbers, academics seek the fastest way of getting their papers published as they fulfill the role of paper-pushing salesman, sacrificing both truth and innovation (Hsieh, 2020). In the process, some serious misdemeanours are inadvertently committed in the intellectual community, such as mass production, fraud and plagiarism (Chou & Chan, 2016). These misdemeanours are symptomatic of the blind and mechanical pursuit for rapid achievement by individual faculty members and a whole higher education trapped in a vortex of competition, pressure, deficiency and insecurity by the collective inertial thinking prevailing in the higher education world (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Chan et al., 2020; Corbo et al., 2016).

Figure 1 is a simple representation of the primary thoughts made in this paper. The fixation on a number of publications (i.e., a scarcity mindset) leads to increasing deficiencies, yet the fundamental mechanism for keeping the system intact is inertial thinking and the campus culture (representing by the circular enclosure in the diagram).
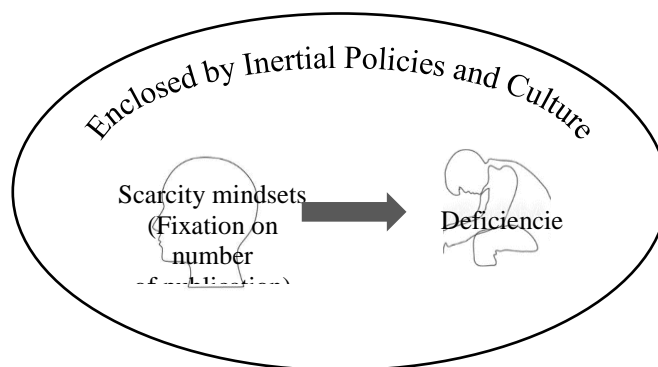

Fig. 1 - The entrapment of faculty in a scarcity mindset by inertial policies and culture

4. Academics' Psychological Problems

The unintended repercussions of a series of MOE's policies and plans aforementioned led Taiwan's higher education into unequal resource allocation. As noted by Hsu (2019) Taiwan now prevails the less friendly environment for learning and instruction due to the market-driven educational policies, and the environment as well as a significant gap between research and industry because of the paper-driven academic reward system. That contradictions are lurking behind the shining numbers the public sees from higher education and global ranking systems are also given forceful argument by findings and experiences reported by others that summarise the next session. We argue the scarcity mindset characterising faculty involvement in their research and the mechanism of inertial thinking maintaining the status quo.

4.1　Higher Education Culture with Scarcity Mindsets

The number of publications in prominent international journals has determined the allocation of research grants, higher education rankings, tenure and promotion and government funding (Kao & Pao, 2009). Academics have come under tremendous pressure and have developed the SSCI syndrome. The failure to reach performance levels or submit oneself for evaluation has effectively led to faculty members' dismissal in various higher education (Tang, 2019b).

Notwithstanding the academic pressures, the square focus on the number of research publications has drowned other missions. For example, according to 2019 Asia Pacific's Most Innovative Universities' top 75 of the Reuters ranking system, there were no single Taiwanese higher education institutions on the list. Reuter identified and ranked the higher education based on "the most to advance science, invent new technologies and power new markets and industries" by at least 50 patents of the number registered in the World Intellectual Property Organization from 2011 to 2016 and also the number of research paper citations (Ewalt, 2019). This circumstance forces Taiwan's academics to acknowledge that their research results have not yet achieved social and economic impact.

Lending support to the ironies as mentioned earlier, a telephone-based survey of Taiwanese perception of higher education in Taiwan carried out by Professor Huang Kun-Huei Education Foundation found that over 70% of Taiwanese believe that the quality of high education in Taiwan is worsening and failing to produce graduates with industry-related skills (Hsu & Kao, 2018). Like the public, employers also face dilemmas. In 2008, a record 95% of high school graduates were registering for higher education, a trend that has continued ever since (Hsueh, 2018). Far from being a reflection of a knowledgeable population, the high enrolment is only evidence of the failure of Taiwan's high education in being selective. Now, the market is filled with degree holders, and it is the preponderance of master and doctoral degree holders that is especially worrisome because it has been a painful task determining the most competent applicants for professional jobs and executive positions.

The overall decline in society should also worry about academics precisely because we live in a knowledge-based economy where those with knowledge fundamentally shape what is happening in society. Many from the young generation today face the prospect of a future with low salaries, high cost of housing and poor standards of living (Hsueh,

2018). Even as academics' boast about their high number of the published article in recognised international journals, they have to shamefully acknowledge that their research has not been that great force for good for the typical person.

As appealing as the description of SSCI syndrome, the notion of scarcity mindset that more comprehensibly accounts for academics' malady. Proposed by Ibrahim et al., (2021) and Mullainathan & Shafir (2014), scarcity mindset attempts to answer why people get locked into illogical thinking patterns. Relying on years of findings from psychology and economics and new empirical research, the authors argue that when we do not have something, we become so focused on getting the scarce item that it puts us in a tunnel and crowds out everything else that is important. Empirically, as faculty focus on achievements in the form of quantity of publications to not appear or feel deficient in the system they are working in, they fail to make the necessary investments in terms of their values and become less aware of and concerned about their surroundings. In the end, even as they make achievements in their number of publications, their fixation on this focus only leads to more deficiencies. In other words, scarcity leads to more scarcity and locks a person in a scarcity mindset.

4.2 The Inertial Thinking on Higher Education Campus

Despite the tremendous ironies associated with academics' lives, they continue to remain either unwilling or incapable of fundamentally freeing themselves from the system that binds them. However, the primary variable for keeping this whole system that quantity inevitably takes precedence intact is inertial thinking. Academics refuse movement into a fundamental mindset and would instead adhere to conventional ideologies and approaches to solve problems. Therefore, inertial thinking is a variable we ought to be most concerned about because it is the variable that keeps both scholars and science entrapped. This incapability or unwillingness to change is referred to as inertia and is the inertial thinking product in higher education.

4.2.1 Essence of Inertial Thinking - Definitions and Functions

Inertial thinking reminds one to maintain existing concepts, recognitions and understanding of phenomena and resist meaningful changes (Zantvoort, 2015). People preferentially take their experiences or knowledge as their primary metric to value and deal with problems, even though there are better alternative approaches to solve them (Gershman et al., 2016; Godkin & Allcorn, 2008). Typically, there is a preference to streamline various conditions, propositions and factors into a single "normal" model, routinely applied to encountered events regardless of difference or uniformity.

4.2.2 Behaviours Associated with Inertial Thinking

Individuals undertaking inertial thinking as their primary frame of reference habitually recognise and deal with emerging events following standard processes under the assumptions of a controllable situation (Bratianu, 2015). Inertial thinking, therefore, leads to a loss of curiosity and poor decision-making (Kingma, 2014). Inertial thinking could be developed through a long journey of life experiences and profound knowledge in specific fields, leading people to rationalise the contexts of problems confidently.

Another phenomenon of inertial thinking frequently occurs due to collective consciousness. Individuals imperceptibly follow the existing community's norms or social ethics; they tend not to exhibit independent thinking and different opinions from others avoiding challenges in the public sphere (Zantvoort, 2015). Inertial thinking may assist individuals in dealing with daily businesses with greater efficiency, but, unfortunately, the lack of proactive attitudes and innovative approaches impedes pioneering efforts (Liao et al., 2008). The refusal of alternative perspectives instigates a narrow mind, intolerance and committing slights and finally dominates individuals' inner-thinking and habitual behaviour and the organisation's culture.

4.2.3 Inertial Thinking in Academia

Higher education institutions are assumed to be a society of academic elites working for knowledge advancement and distribution (Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Wu et al., 2013). This pedigree assumes that academia on campus is well-trained in specific professional fields through academic activities such as research, that through participation in these activities, faculty members will develop the necessary confidence and a set of habitual thinking models (Wu et al., 2013). However, through academic research and scientific exploration with persuasively standard processes, professional training shapes their thinking styles and develops in their concepts standardised manipulating approaches, eventually narrowing their vision and value (Munene & Senese, 2014). This specific and even fixed thinking style, indeed inertial thinking, gradually dominates individuals' mindsets and causes elite academic communities to perceive and fixedly respond to encountered businesses. The scientific thinking procedure provides effective and effortless strategies for academics to succeed in their careers. Inertial thinking facilitates the pursuance of remarkable performance quickly and enables these academics to easily achieve the expectation of higher education evaluation and academic reputation. However, it also leads academics to be uncreative, unintelligent and even numb to problems (Bratianu, 2015). This fact reflects that meritocracy on campus, more than the reality of academic activities, prevails and overwhelmingly influences faculty members' mindsets (Wu et

al., 2013). Higher education institutions consequently lose their lofty missions and realistic functions to solve problems in society or the academic community (Genus & Jha, 2012; Godkin & Allcorn, 2008).

5. Approaches to Overcoming Collective Inertial and Scarcity Mindert in Higher Education

As much as existing norms and approaches create inertial thinking, they also impart stability and certainty to organisations. They pool together diverse members and grant them a joint mission, shared objectives and create concrete and understandable protocols for achieving high results. A sudden knocking down of these norms and approaches can create chaos that can have long-lasting adverse effects. However, inertial thinking that created unmet needs can be utilised to achieve changes in filling the space between the old values and new institutional practice rather than in enmity function.

Introducing the new will involve, in part, the gradual creation of an intellectual elite who will carry out research with the decency it demands. In other words, creating an academic body will be research-minded in the fullest sense rather than numbers-centred. Such a creed will be better positioned to do justice because, as academics, the mission is to seek truth, profess it and use it for progress. The development of this body will demand, in part, an understanding of the psychological variables needed for character building considering the plethora of motivation framework. In the following sections, we consider two variables: self-determination and self-efficacy, as fundamental theories.

5.1 Self-determination Theory

The theory of self-determination, first proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000), recognises that people possess the three-level of motivation from their heteronomy (condition of individuals governed or controlled by others) to their self-determination (condition of individuals who control their choice and live). Figure 2 illustrates the three-level of motivations: amotivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. People with the first level of motivation, amotivation, are passive and do not initiate behaviours independently. Individuals with the second level of motivation, extrinsic motivation, can be affected or motivated by external factors such as reward or punishment, contingent self-esteem, social evaluation or expectation. Finally, individuals promote themselves to the highest level of intrinsic motivation when they possess the authority to liberally make decisions independently and happily enjoy the actions that spring from their decisions.

However, this theory also suggested that the actions inspired by extrinsic motivation could become self-determination as social value internalised within the value system of individuals. The value is internalised by mapping out three human needs: autonomy, competence and connectedness. The autonomy need represents individuals' authority regarding decision-making for their behaviours; individuals should feel confident that they can initiate their behaviours liberally. The competence need denotes that individuals pursue a higher self-identity, peer recognition and efficacy, while the relatedness need signifies the desire to have good relationships with others and build social networks. Personal well-being is expected to increase as long as these fundamental needs are satisfied (Church et al., 2013).
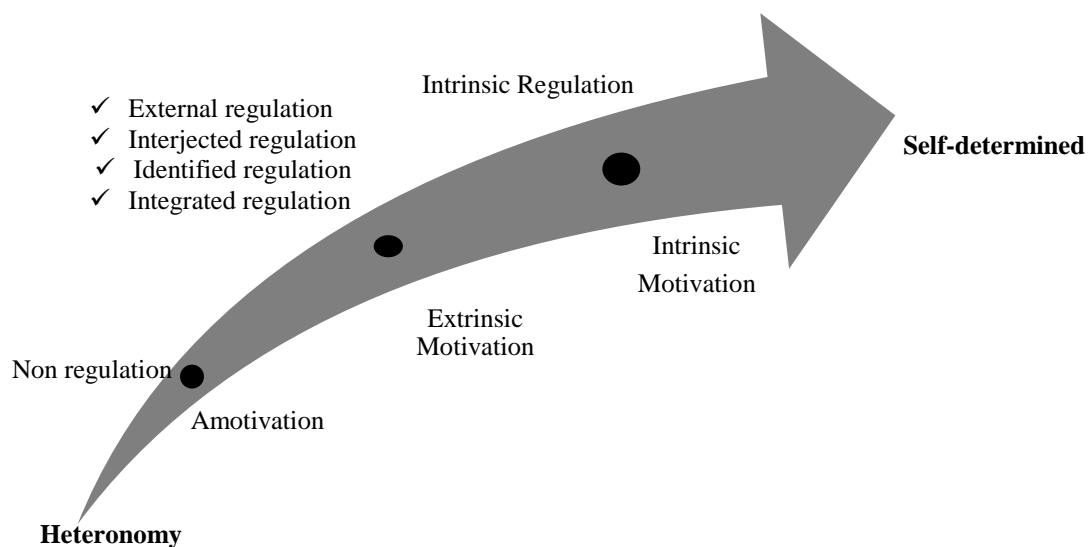

Fig. 2 - The Self-determination Continuum Showing Types Of Motivation with Their Regular Styles, Locus of Causality and Corresponding Processes (Modified From Ryan, & Deci, 2000)

Among faculty members, autonomy plays the key role among these domains and demands self-determination to develop confidence, decide motivation, and achieve satisfaction; satisfaction of autonomy is necessary for contentment on their competence and relatedness needs (Larson et al., 2019). Moreover, employing the self-determination theory,

academics' autonomy needs to be satisfied through the opportunity to manifest self-control of their behaviours and initiate self-action for their career goals, leading to a mature satisfaction of their competencies and relatedness needs (Daumiller et al., 2020). This kind of motivation is needed to invigorate academics to pursue the advanced goals of the research (Pautz & Vogel, 2020). The encouraging spirit will imperil a habitual sense of deficiency and insecurity and deconstruct the vortex of scarcity.

5.2 Self-efficacy Theory

A classic theory from Bandura (1977) suggested the necessity of self-efficacy. When people with high self-efficacy face negative outcome expectations, they are more likely to change their work environment and persist at their work. Individuals with high self-efficacy have a positive attitude toward their behaviour and possess high action execution. On the other hand, people with low self-efficacy were more likely to have feelings of hopelessness and less likely to persist in similar situations. Self-efficacy is also one of the primary sources of individuals' motivation. This powerhouse prods people to revitalise personal enthusiasm, which arises from internal traits (such as personal performance accomplishments and emotional arousal) and external circumstances (social role model and socially verbal persuasion) (see Fig. 3) (Blasi, 2004; Reyes-Cruz & Perales-Escudero, 2016). People habitually decide their behaviours and motivation by relying on their self-efficacy (Ismayilova & Klassen, 2019). A high sense of self–efficacy provokes action and encourages more efforts on one's commitment. Thus, higher education's faculty members should upgrade their efficacy and professional skills, and they should highlight their contributions while reinforcing their motivation to pursue real goals for academic and social advancement. By enhancing their efficacy regarding their professional competence, academics would be better able to deconstruct inertial thinking.
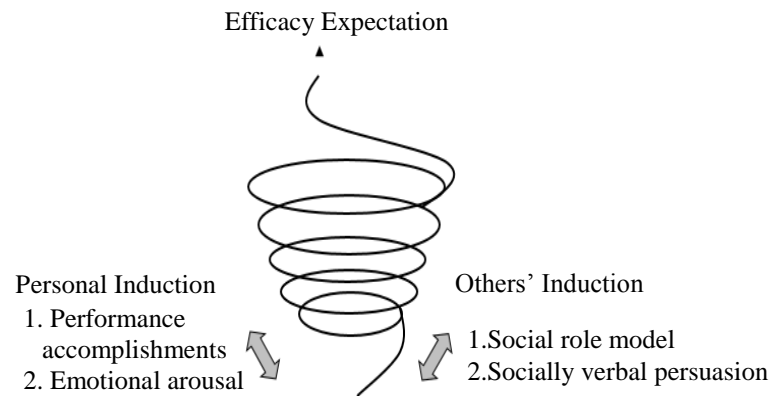

Efficacy Expectation

Personal Induction
1. Performance accomplishments
2. Emotional arousal

Others' Induction
1. Social role model
2. Socially verbal persuasion

Fig. 3 - Major Factors Reciprocally Forming Efficacy Expectations (Modified From Bandura, 1977)

5.3 Approaches to Overcoming Inertial Thinking in Current Higher Education Culture

The reflection on the collective inertia and scarcity on campus results in that higher education in Taiwan, similar to those in most Asian countries, blindly and mechanically multiply efforts to demonstrate their academic achievement. They perceive reaching up to world standards by enthroning (S)SCI journal papers. This (S)SCI index is developed and reviewed based on Western philosophy and social experiences. While Western thought has excellent merits and could be replicated in non-Western parts of the world, this fact could well reflect that higher education in Taiwan instinctively and persistently take on the post-colonial complex to determine their global perspective and highly praising the achievements of faculty members and even higher education. This blindness inevitably displaces higher education goals due to high pressure and consequential inertia, causing us to pursue global recognition more than sustainable development and lose the objectivity and diversity desperately needed in a post-colonial country. Academia today, in this independent country, need to orientate realistic sociocultural perspectives which facilitate higher education to entrench themselves in societies with reciprocally realistic functions and academic missions.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

As academics, especially in higher technological and vocational education, it is understandable that institutions require faculty members to conduct research. Faculty members ought to pursue research with a restless desire to find the truth because the research is about and then equally restless desire to improve life's condition so that research has usefulness. These aspects are described in a classic sentimental piece written by Rosenberger (1950) that posits the research challenges to apparent truths, starting with curiosity, objective and continuing and then benefits both the mind and spirit. Faculty members in the higher technological and vocational education program possess the missions to facilitate the development of industries and societies with practical knowledge more than theoretical papers.

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Nevertheless, the focus on creating more research papers and as fast as possible, then at all cost, undermines the essential intentions and characteristics that impart to research its very essence. Doing so threatens science's value, transforming it into an enterprise that most work is either substandard or repetitive. The answers to the questions posited by much research are slow in arriving as we squander the money granted to us and fail to respond to various matters with sound rationalism and empiricism. Thus, synthetically this paper with introspective and retrospective approaches finally raises some following conclusions.

6.1 Meritocracy Prevails Among Academia in Higher Education and Dominates Its Liberality

Today, Taiwanese higher education exert academic meritocracy and emphasise faculty individuals' and collective communities' measurable performance to determine the reputation and future improvement (Alma et al., 2016; Brown & Tannock, 2009). The resulting intense pressure compels the higher education's administrative authority to forcefully request faculty members to submit themselves to measurable and external accreditation and rapid-results achievement as leverage in international competition regardless of the real meanings and functions related to the missions (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Reevy & Deason, 2014). Both the higher education authorities and faculty members become trapped in a vortex of competition and pressure in blind pursuit of extrinsic achievement, and a collective scarcity mindset with a strong sense of deficiency and insecurity prevails (Nguyen, 2017). The resulting sense of deficiency and insecurity negatively affects the ability of academics to fulfil their social responsibilities. The autonomy of both the higher education and individual faculty individuals for knowledge advancement fades in the gloom and doom of meritocracy.

6.2 The Collective Inertia Pursuing Speed-Up Achievement in Numerical Style Causes Individuals' Scarcity of Mindsets; Both Cause A Disastrous Vicious Circle and Continuously Damage Academic Growth

Faculty members generally develop unconscious inertia and counter-academic behaviours due to the context of meritocracy and continuous pressure and eventually become afraid of problem-awareness, innovation and risks (Munene & Senese, 2014). Unitary goals, originating from habitually inertial thinking, narrow academics' visions and values and even limit achievement motivation of both individual faculty members and the whole higher education (Zantvoort, 2015). Eventually, a potential crisis of academic lag and social stagnation occurs in this vicious circle and even prevails in this elite community.

6.3 There is an Urgent Need To Revitalise Faculty Members' Educational Enthusiasm Through Building Their Self-Efficacy and Professional Autonomy

Higher education and their faculty members currently need their self-determination and self-efficacy to revitalise their career enthusiasm and to deconstruct the cycle of collective inertia that entraps them. It is urgent to break away from inertial ideological modes of post-colonial countries and pursue sustainable academic advancement and social development values. Through professional autonomy, academics, who are professional talents rather than paper manufacturers, would actively perform their academic missions to reach manifest needs, start their professional values and social responsibilities afresh, employment prosperity and reciprocally develop their academic careers.

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