Chinese international students' use of social media: Exploring the significance of WeChat in students' practices in Australian higher education field

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Social media platforms now play an essential part in most people's lives. WeChat is one of the most popular social media platforms amongst Chinese users, including Chinese international students while they are in Australia. However, the consequence of their practice remains under-examined mainly and especially in terms of how WeChat might be engaged with by university authorities. Therefore, in terms of making sense of the digitally mediated experiences of Chinese international students, particular attention needs to be paid to the WeChat social media platform.

In this presentation, I will describe my study that explores how students' WeChat practice mediate negotiation of the education field and their habitus as international Chinese students in an Australian university. The study recruited 15 undergraduate Chinese international students studying in different faculties at a local university using semi-structured interviews and scroll-back method. I will discuss my use of Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework as the basis of the methodology to guide data collection and analysis. This methodology presents an expansive theoretical structure useful for reflecting on the dynamic context and factors underlying Chinese international students' social media practices. It offers a way of understanding their habitus-becoming process and adaptation as well as accompanying social and cultural issues as a result of WeChat use.