Reframing Transition through Transmedia Storytelling: Inspirations from Indigenous Pedagogies

Charlie Tak Hei KWONG
Falmouth University & University of the Arts London

This presentation introduces an arts-based educational research project that explores transmedia storytelling (TS) as an inclusive and trauma-informed pedagogical intervention for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) during their transition to higher education.

The research seeks to address the limitations of conventional transition practices within higher education, which predominantly adopt top-down institutional models that emphasise orientation, assessment, and policy compliance while neglecting the lived experiences of students (The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education 2020). Such models often marginalise the relational and narrative dimensions that are integral to fostering a sense of belonging.

Inspired by Indigenous pedagogies that conceive storytelling as a non-linear, relational, and cyclical mode of learning, this study reconceptualises transition not as a linear trajectory (Iseke 2013), but as a fluid and situated process of becoming, co-constructed through narrative. The research aims to explore TS as a non-linear framework that enables students to articulate their identities across diverse media, revealing fragmented experiences into cohesive narratives of agency and belonging (Jenkins 2006).

The presentation will reflect on how these guiding principles have shaped the design of participatory research across multiple sites and will discuss how Indigenous epistemologies inform a nuanced understanding of relational and collective well-being. This understanding contributes meaningfully to supporting students' transitions within the higher education context.

Conference Lightning Talk Notes

Before we get into the topic of transition and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), it is worth looking at how many disabled students are applying through UCAS in the UK. Every year, more than one hundred thousand disabled students apply to UK higher education. This tells us that transition is not a small or marginal issue. In many universities, transition is defined as success through orientation, information, and based on assessment. Students are expected to quickly understand systems, policies, and academic expectations. Success is often measured by how well they adapt to the institution.

However, report shows that most UK institutions rely on generic transition programmes. These programmes are usually designed from the top down. They focus on efficiency and compliance rather than lived experience, a ground-level perspective. Transition is often imagined as a straight line. You arrive, adjust, perform, and then succeed. This model assumes that everyone moves forward in the same way.

Meanwhile, many disabled students report significant difficulties during transition. It raises questions about whether the model itself is fit for purpose. During transition, students are not only learning new systems. They are also dealing with uncertainty, loss, and change. Many are asking a deeper question: who am I in this new environment as well as in the past? We see performance and attendance during transition those practical items. But do students know who they are in relation to where they come from? And do we recognise students beyond labels, categories, or support plans?

These questions are often missing from transition practices. Identity does not develop in a straight line. Both learning and lived experiences are often fragmented, interrupted, and can be emotional. For many students, progress includes pauses, returns, and rethinking. So, if identity is non-linear, transition should not be designed as linear. Transition is not a single moment at the start of university. It is an ongoing process that unfolds over time. Students revisit questions of belonging, confidence, and identity throughout their studies.

My research is proposing storytelling as part of the transition intervention. Why storytelling? In Indigenous pedagogies, storytelling is not simply a way to share personal experience.
It is understood as a holistic way of knowing, teaching, and being in the world.

Stories carry knowledge, laws, and values that guide how people understand themselves and their responsibilities. They see storytelling connect learners not only to information, but to community, land, and lived experience. Learning, from this perspective, does not happen through content delivery alone. It happens through relationships, relationships with people, place, history, and memory. This challenges dominant educational models that separate knowledge from emotion or identity. Instead, storytelling brings learning back to the whole person.

Indigenous knowledge systems are also non-linear. Learning is often described as cyclical and relational, rather than step by step. Knowledge is not organised as a wall that students climb, but as a network or a tree of relationships. We often return to the same stories at different moments in life. Each return allows new meaning to emerge, shaped by experience and context. This means repetition is not failure, and pause is not regression. Learning moves through reflection, return, and re-connection. This non-linear structure closely reflects how people learn and grow.

Through storytelling, identity is formed and re-formed in relationship. Re-storying allows learners to take control of how they understand their experiences. Moments that are often labelled as failure, delay, or deficit may be reframed. They become part of a larger story of becoming, rather than evidence of weakness. This is especially important during transition, when students may feel uncertain or disconnected. Storytelling creates space for meaning-making, dignity, and agency. It allows learners to see themselves as active participants in their own journeys, rather than a service recipient.

Transmedia storytelling reflects the same non-linear principle, but for both creator and audience. Stories are created and told across multiple media and platforms, rather than through a single format. We can enter the story from different points and move at different speeds. Meaning is created through connection across fragments, not through a fixed sequence. There is no single correct path to follow. Instead, transmedia storytelling values participation, interpretation, and personal sense-making. We are testing the flexibility that supports agency, emotional regulation, and self-authorship, which are critical for SEND students navigating non-linear transitions into higher education.

So, in my research development, transmedia storytelling is used as an educational intervention during transition. We did a creative medium mapping for academic departments at Falmouth University, which is specialist university in creative arts, so students are already working with writing, images, audio, and digital media. These multiple forms allow students to express identity in ways that feel safe and meaningful, and to expand their creative practice when

exploring their identity. We want to see fragmented experiences can be included into narratives of agency and belonging. This approach supports students not by integration, but by giving them space to tell, revisit, and reshape their stories over time during transition.

We are hoping to expand transition support beyond institutional systems and procedures to the personal level, through identity work. Rather than asking students to simply adapt, this approach recognises transition as a lived and ongoing experience. We are trying to position transmedia storytelling as an educational intervention, not just a creative or expressive method, which will be tested to support reflection, agency, and meaning-making. We are hoping to develop a non-extractive and decolonial design framework with transmedia storytelling, which aims to support SEND students with non-linear learning journeys without reducing their experiences to data or deficit.

This research conceptualises educational transition for SEND students through the structure of a seed, emphasising emergence rather than predetermined outcomes. The seed coat represents trauma-informed pedagogy, which establishes conditions of safety, choice, collaboration, and mutuality necessary for engagement. The cotyledon symbolises narrative as a shared meaning-making space, providing early and ongoing support across different stages of transition. The radicle represents the educational intervention itself, understood as the initial point of contact with students rather than a final outcome. The hypocotyl reflects identity exploration, recognising uncertainty and instability as integral to transitional processes. The epicotyl corresponds to transmedia storytelling, which opens multiple potential pathways for development while remaining oriented towards the research questions.

While the seed structure representing the conceptual framework remains consistent, the surrounding soil represents the cultural and educational context, within which moderating variables shape how the proposed intervention, as the plant, develops across different settings.

We are hoping to promote a message from the research. Every story, every one matters in transition. When students are supported to tell, return to, and reshape their stories, transition becomes not something to survive, but a shared process of becoming.

Thank you.

Conference Presentation Material

*This presentation represents a conceptual and developmental stage of an ongoing PhD project. Research insight may evolve as empirical research progresses.

Reframing Transition through Transmedia Storytelling:
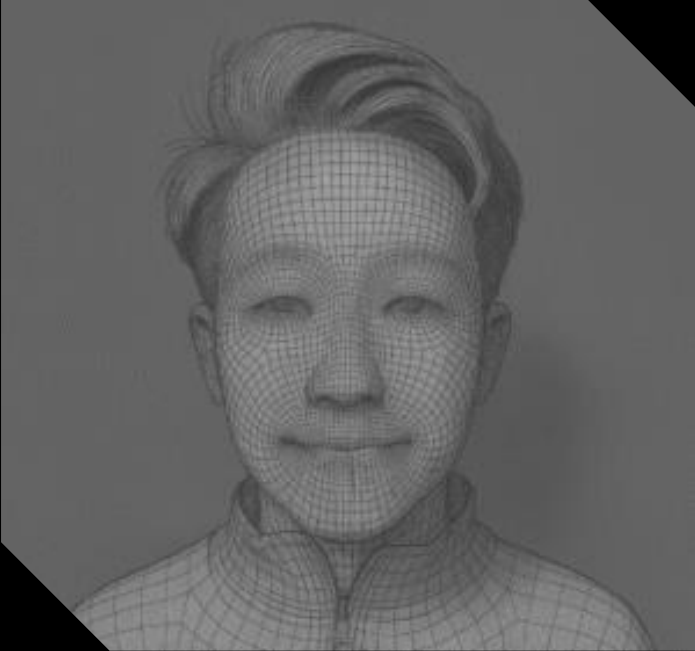
Inspirations from Indigenous Pedagogies

Charlie Tak Hei KWONG

PhD Researcher, Falmouth University & UAL, UK
Education Media Design*r*, MaKami College, Alberta, Canada

SHIFT2026

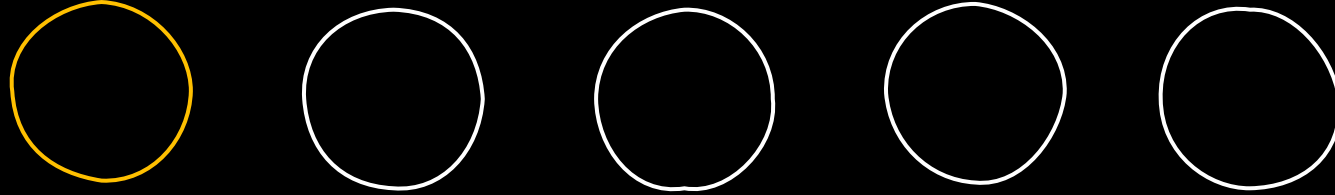# WHO AM I ?

Charlie Kwong (He/him)

PhD Researcher in Arts & Special Ed @ Falmouth & UAL
Ed Media Designer (Curr Dev. & EdTech) @ MaKami College, Alberta

Arts-based Educational Research | Transmedia Storytelling
Special Education | Transition | Identity | Digital Media
Intervention

SHIFT2026

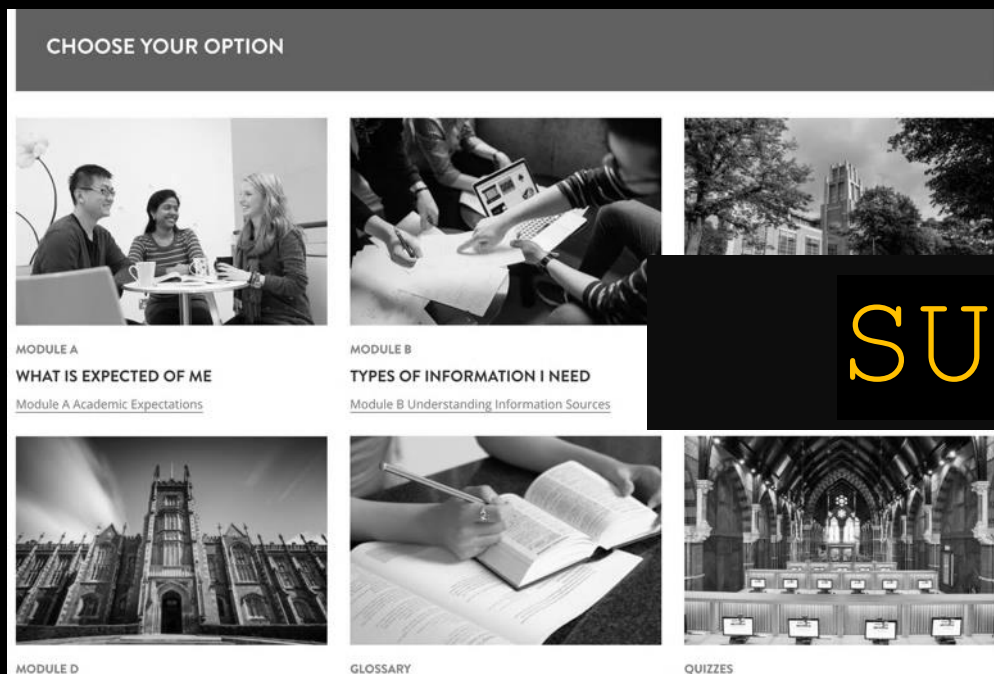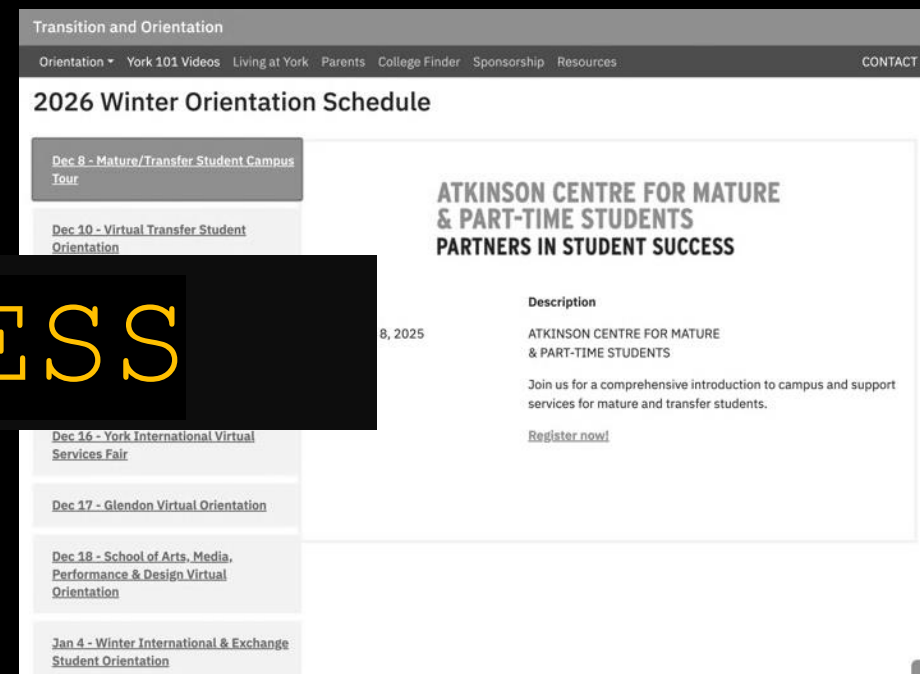**Over 100,000 (~20%)** disabled students apply through UCAS per year

(UCAS, 2025)

SHIFT2026

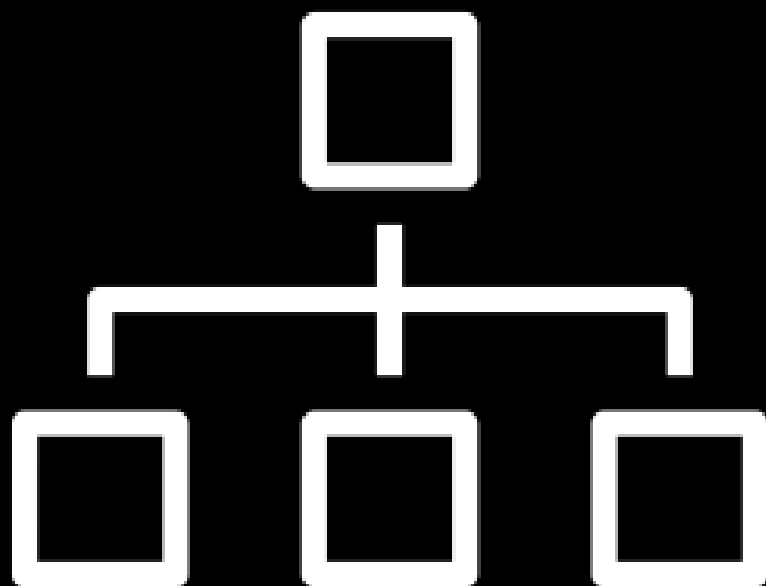Screenshot from *Queen's University Belfast*

Screenshot from *York University (Canada)*

SUCCESS

SHIFT2026

72% of UK HE institutions rely on generic transition programs

(Advance HE, 2019)

SHIFT2026

68% of disabled students experienced difficulties transitioning to HE

(National Union of Students, 2020)

S H I F T 2 0 2 6

WHO AM I ?

——————

SHIFT2026

Performance A⁺

Attendance

Do they know who they are in relation to where they come from?

——————

S H I F T 2 0 2 6

Identity is Non-linear
Experience is Non-linear

We are not linear

─────────

Transition should not be linear

———————

S H I F T 2 0 2 6

Story is **Knowledge** and **Pedagogy**

Image from <u>thecanadianencyclopedia.ca</u>

- Epistemological framework - a way of knowing, teaching, and being
- Carries knowledge, laws, and values
- Connect with community, land, and spirit
- Connect heart, mind, body, and spirit
  (Archibald 2008)
- Living pedagogical tool

Story is Non-linear
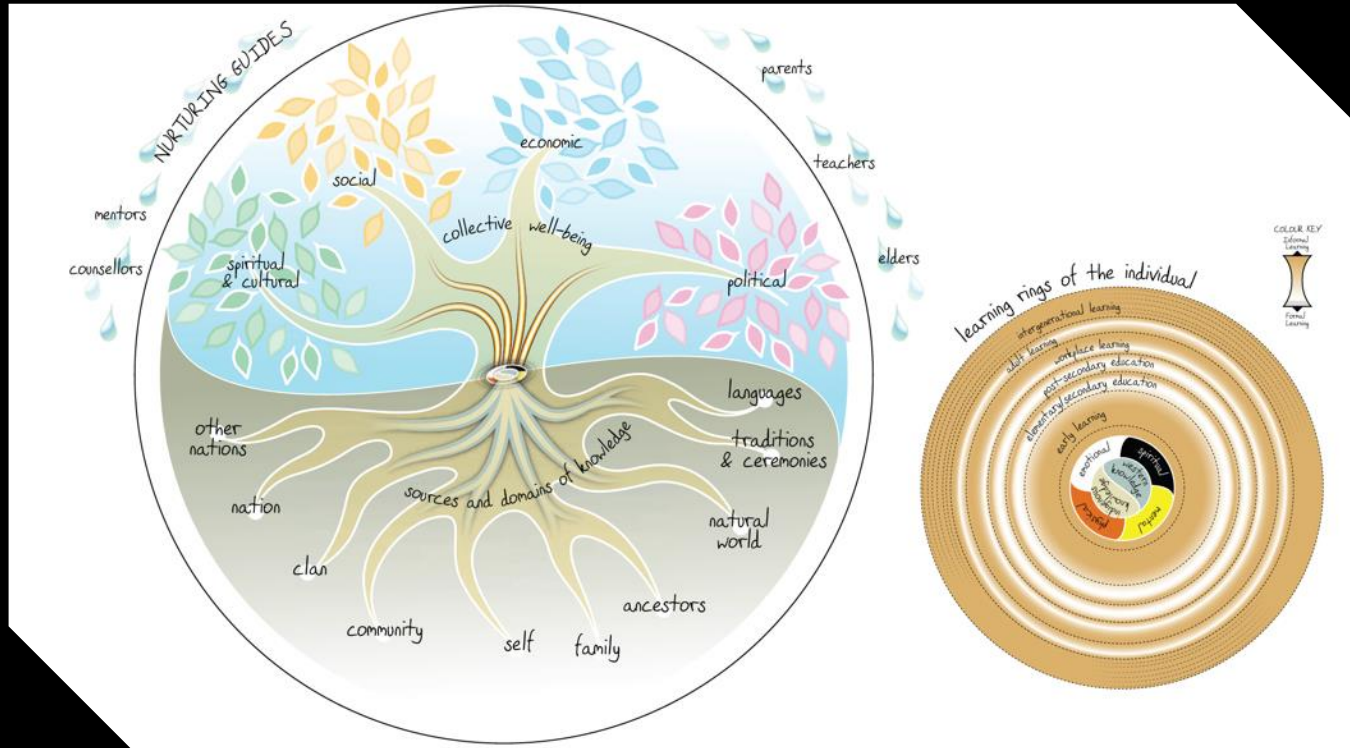
Canadian Council on Learning, 2007

- Knowledge through storytelling as concentric circles
- A tree of relationships rather than a ladder of hierarchy
- Non-linearity enables knowledge to spiral, interconnect, and self-organize (Yunkaporta, 2019)

SHIFT2026

Storytelling as **Holistic Becoming**

- Identity is co-constructed in stories through relationships and responsibilities
- Holistic and relational (Day & McPherson, 2025)
- Re-storying as agency
- Can we allow them to "re-story" their lives to counter colonial narratives or labels such as deficit or disability. By taking control of the narrative, a student can reframe their experiences not as failures, but as stories of becoming during transition to HE.

Transmedia Storytelling is Non-linear

Image by *netflix*

Image by *rollingstone*

Image by *Dark Horse*

Transmedia Storytelling
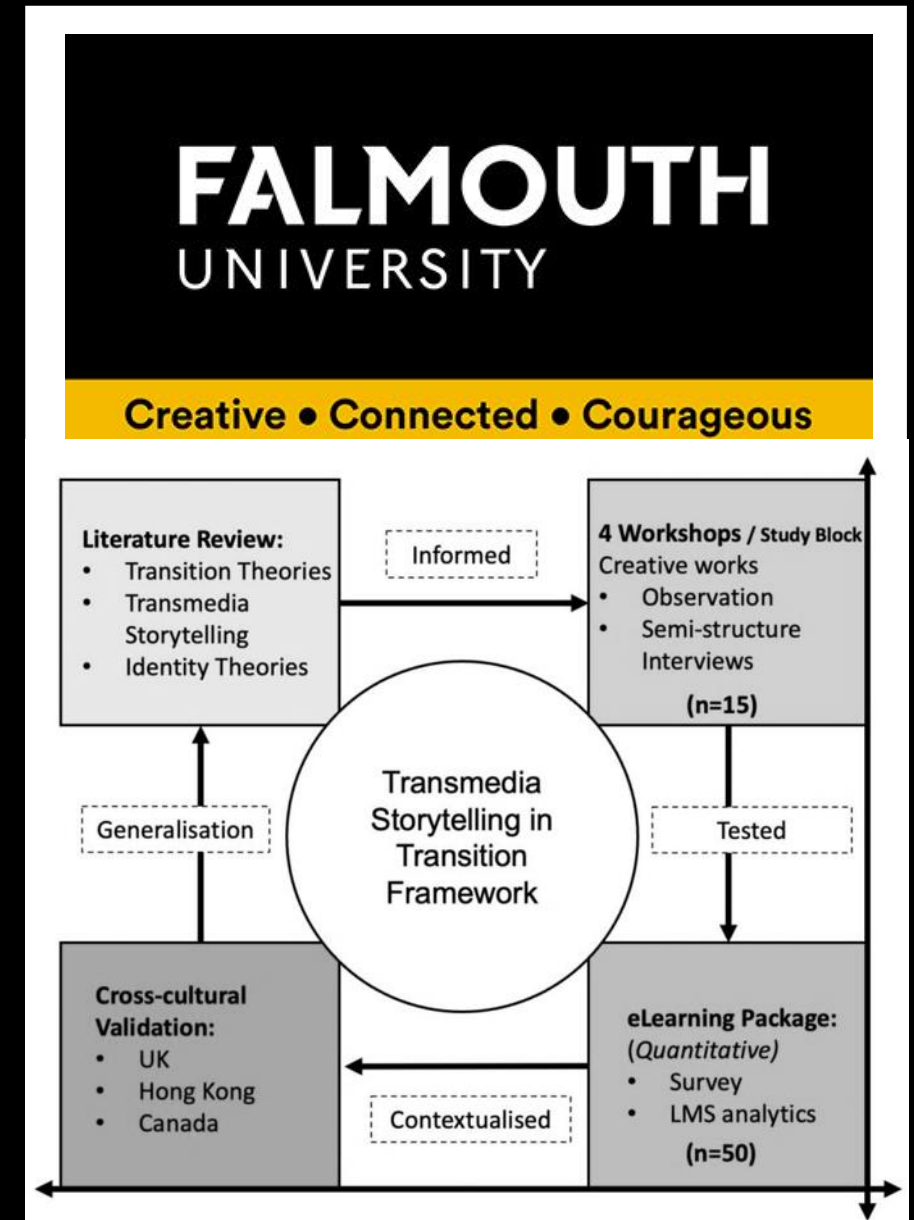## as Educational Intervention

Traditional Media
+
Digital Media
=
Building Identity through
Holistic Arts-based Transition

Informing the Iterative Research

- Transmedia storytelling, narrative, SEND lived experience, and transition share non-linear, multi-layered qualities that reveal their interconnectedness in this research.

- Expanding transition support to personal level through identity work

- Positions transmedia storytelling as an educational intervention, not a creative method

- Explore a non-extractive and decolonise design for supporting students with non-linear learning journeys

Stages of Germination

Transmedia storytelling

Identity exploration

Educational intervention

Narrative as a shared meaning-making space

Trauma-informed pedagogy

Bean seed (dicot)

Epicotyl · Hypocotyl · Radicle · Cotyledon · Seed coat
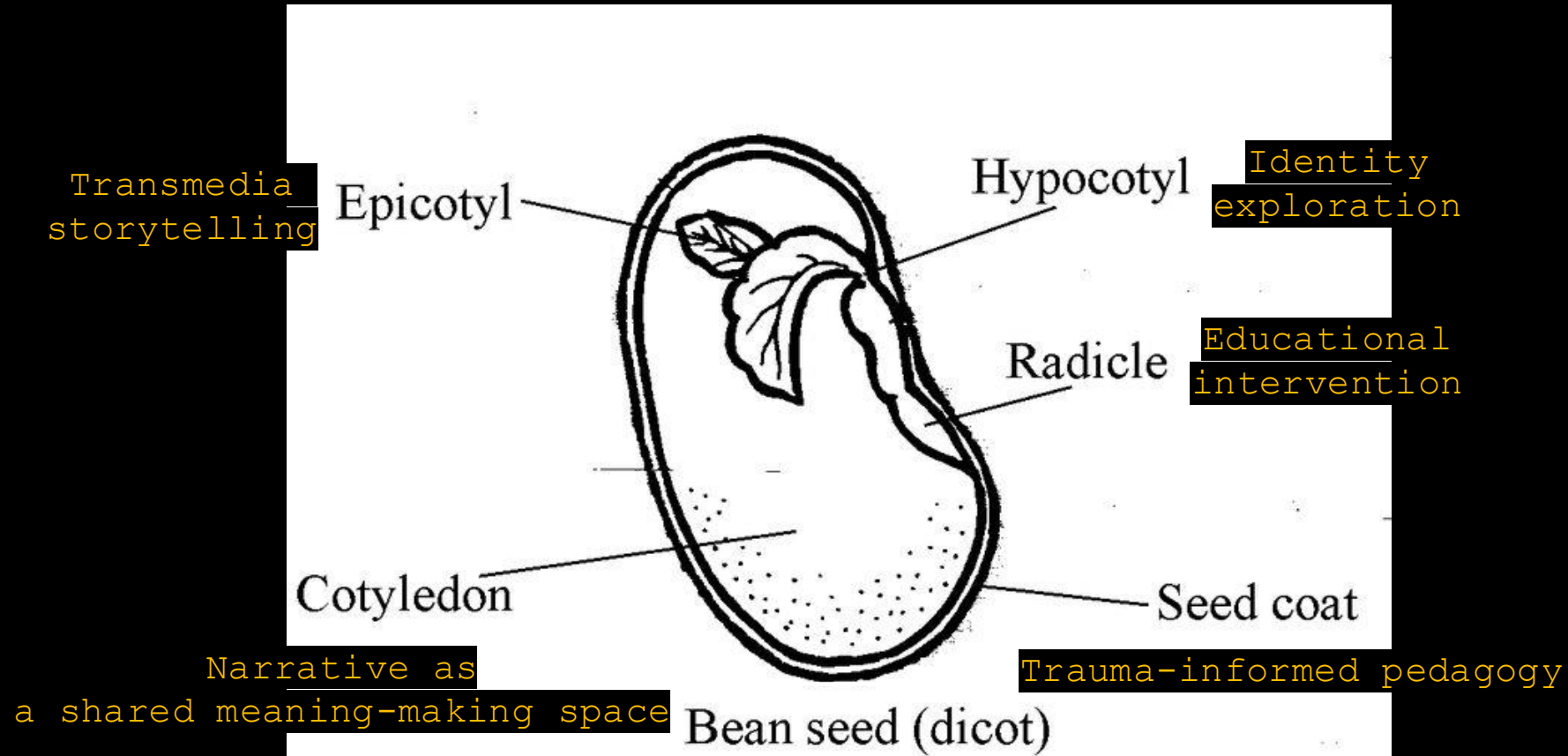
* This metaphor is used as a conceptual framing device rather than a predictive model.

S H I F T 2 0 2 6

Thank you & Stay Connected

Building Identity Through Stories

Every story, every one matters in transition.

We co-develop and co-create transmedia storytelling experiences that empower diverse students through identity exploration for transition into higher education.

Charlie Kwong, PhD Researcher

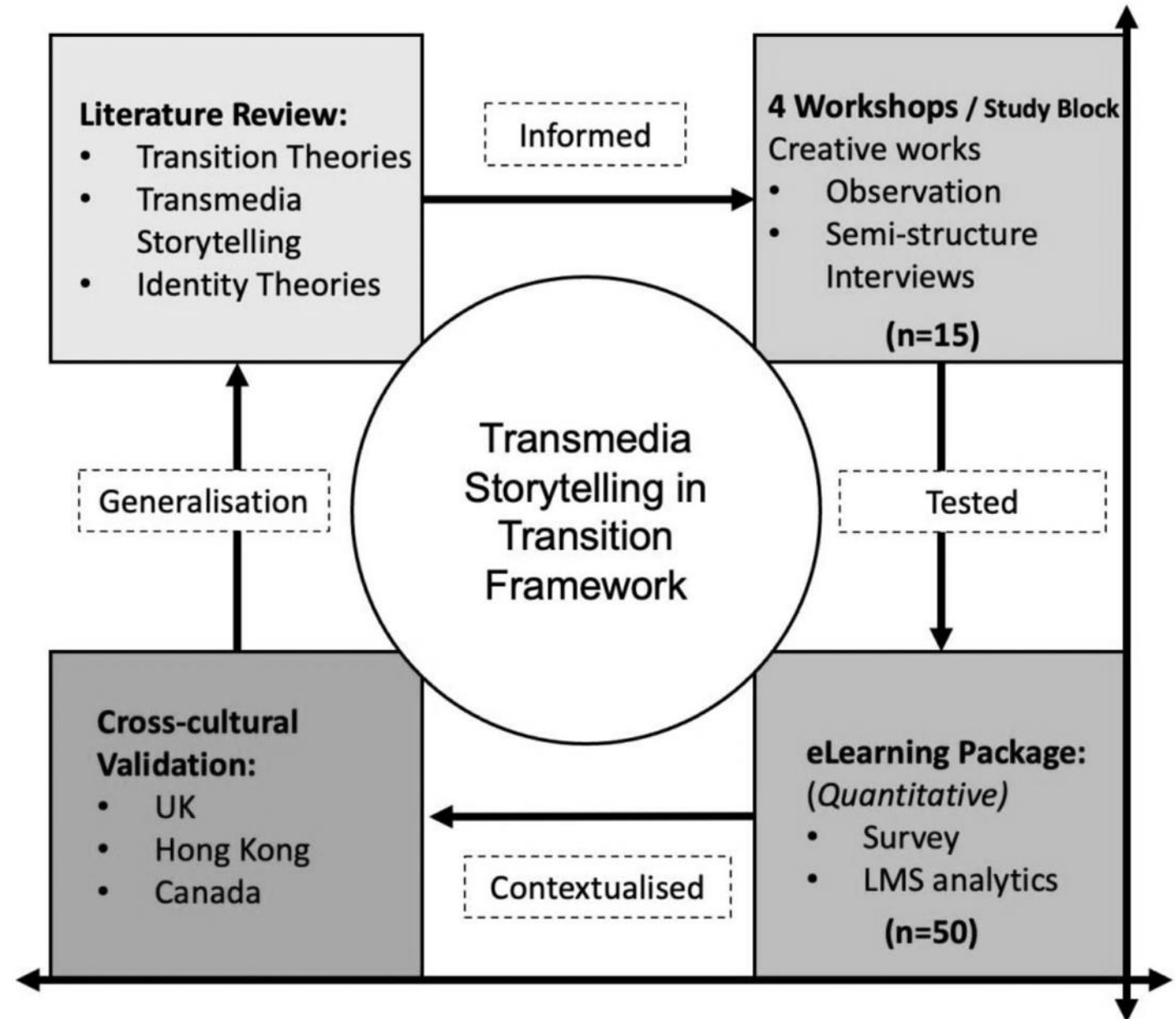c.kwong1220251@arts.ac.uk - external
tk290331@falmouth.ac.uk - internal

For research update, learning & PD resources, and arts-based transition tips:

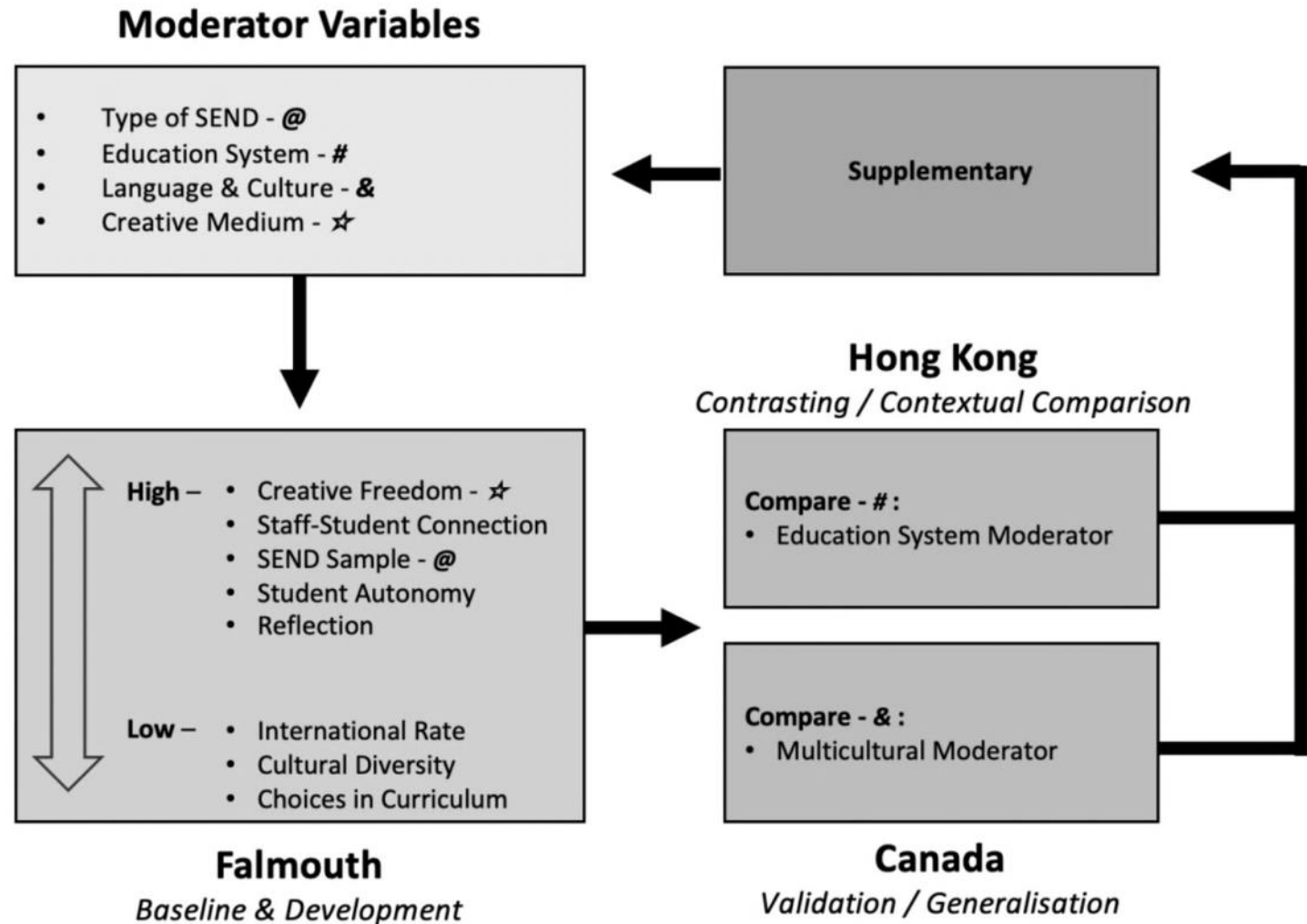bits.research

Iterative Research Design

This mixed methods research is iterative. It combines a literature review of transition theories, identity exploration, and educational interventions with the collection of qualitative data from four student-centred workshop sessions in each study block focusing on written and digital media with new students (n = 15), followed by semi-structured interviews. Pre- and post-test surveys will be offered to both in-person and online participants, while learning system analytics will be collected only from the online module (n = 50) designed based on the workshops' preliminary findings to ensure valid quantitative data for triangulation. It will be used to understand participants' experiences in both in-person and online contexts.

Literature Review:
- Transition Theories
- Transmedia Storytelling
- Identity Theories

Informed

4 Workshops / Study Block
Creative works
- Observation
- Semi-structure Interviews

(n=15)

Generalisation

Transmedia Storytelling in Transition Framework

Tested

Cross-cultural Validation:
- UK
- Hong Kong
- Canada

Contextualised

eLearning Package:
(Quantitative)
- Survey
- LMS analytics

(n=50)

Cross-Cultural Moderation Framework Overview

Falmouth University serves as the baseline for a creative, connected, and supportive learning environment to SEND. Two additional sites provide contextual comparisons: (1) Hong Kong, which focuses on the Education System Moderator, comparing how a structured system shapes TS in supporting SEND student transition; (2) Canada, which explores the Multicultural Moderator, comparing how cultural diversity influence the same process. Each site tests one central condition while maintaining consistent workshop and evaluation methods. This design will supplement how transmedia storytelling operates across diverse educational and cultural contexts.

Moderator Variables

- Type of SEND - @
- Education System - #
- Language & Culture - &
- Creative Medium - ✫

Supplementary

High –
- Creative Freedom - ✫
- Staff-Student Connection
- SEND Sample - @
- Student Autonomy
- Reflection

Low –
- International Rate
- Cultural Diversity
- Choices in Curriculum

Falmouth
Baseline & Development

Hong Kong
Contrasting / Contextual Comparison

Compare - # :
- Education System Moderator

Compare - & :
- Multicultural Moderator

Canada
Validation / Generalisation

References

Advance HE (2019) *Equality in Higher Education: Staff Statistical Report 2019*. Advance HE. Available at: https://s3.eu west 2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe document manager/documents/advance he/AdvanceHE_EqHE_Staff_Stats_Report_2019_1569507134.pdf (Accessed: 6 December 2025).

Archibald, J. A. (2008) *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press.

Canadian Council on Learning (2007) *First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model*. Available at: https://firstnationspedagogy.com/CCL_Learning_Model_FN.pdf (Accessed: 24 December 2025).

Day, K. and McPherson, L. (2025) 'Resilient epistemologies: Integrating Crotty's framework with Indigenous yarning protocols for decolonial research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 24.

Disabled Students UK (2024) *The 2024 Access Insights Report*. Disabled Students UK. Available at: https://disabledstudents.co.uk/wp content/uploads/2024/12/2024 Access Insights Report.pdf (Accessed: 2 December 2026).

Higgins, M. (2016) 'Decolonizing school science: Pedagogically enacting agential literacy and ecologies of relationships', in Taylor, C. and Hughes, C. (eds.) *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 186 205.

Iseke, J. (2013) 'Indigenous storytelling as research', *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 6(4), pp. 559 577.

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Tuck, E. and Yang, K.W. (2012) 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), pp. 1 40. Available at: https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf (Accessed: 24 December 2025).

Undergraduate Application Service (UCAS) (2025) 'Advice for disabled students and students with SEND'. Available at: https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying to university/students with individual needs/disabled students (Accessed: 2 December 2025).

Yunkaporta, T. (2019) *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World*. London: HarperCollins.

SHIFT 2026