

# KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NEWS 29

## BUILDING BRIDGES NOT BARRIERS

**Daniel Kyereko, Lecturer in Education and Social Justice with the Department of Education**

**Daniel Kyereko's** recent research project focused on how West African migrant families experience and navigate Ghana's free basic education policy in everyday school settings. He collaborated with migrant parents, teachers, and school leaders to examine the educational journey, from enrollment to classroom experiences, and the strategies developed by families and educators. The research uncovered the underlying issues affecting access and participation in what is intended to be a free and universal system. Daniel revealed the discrepancies between policy goals and actual experiences, as well as assumptions about language, identity, and inclusion within postcolonial educational contexts.

Migrant students face significant admission challenges because many schools are unaware of them and lack support protocols. Most

migrant families rely on informal networks, such as friends, faith communities, or neighbours, to learn about entry requirements, academic support options, and staff who speak their languages. While these channels provide valuable guidance, they can also lead to misinformation and exclude families, thus creating inequities in a system that theoretically offers equal opportunity. These findings suggest a need to bridge formal and informal information channels by working with community gatekeepers, to ensure accurate information reaches all families.

In multilingual classrooms, instruction in English or a dominant Ghanaian language creates barriers for migrant students. Teachers rarely pause to translate, and classmates sometimes label newcomers as "slow" or "quiet," damaging confidence and hindering progress across subjects



like English language, mathematics, science, and social studies. Despite these challenges, Daniel observed remarkable student agency, with children naturally stepping into "cultural translator" roles, bridging gaps between teachers and classmates by interpreting terms and concepts. In some schools, deliberate student pairings enable more proficient speakers to mentor newcomers, supporting both academic learning and social integration.

Effective school approaches include staff from migrant backgrounds who improve student engagement and co-facilitate inclusive learning. Daniel suggests developing a translated admissions framework with district-level monitoring, and providing teacher training on peer translation strategies and inclusive teaching methods.

With clearer policies, better teacher training, and stronger community partnerships, Ghana's linguistically diverse classrooms can become truly inclusive spaces where all children thrive.



# ENVIRONMENTAL ARTIVISM TAKES CENTRE STAGE IN KUALA LUMPUR

**Dr Felicia Liu, Department of Environment and Geography**

In May 2025, Dr Felicia Liu, hosted a two-day workshop at British Council Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, bringing together more than 40 environmental artists, activists, and researchers to explore *how can art can spark environmental action?*

The workshop brought together artists, activists and academics to discuss impactful climate action, education and communication. It specifically examined how art can facilitate environmental action when opportunities for dissent and civil society action are decreasing globally.

Through interactive activities and dialogue, the workshop explored how artistic expression can influence everything from public policy to community behaviour.

The workshop is supported by the [YESI Knowledge Exchange Fellowship Programme](#), and co-funded by the [Humanities Research Centre](#) and the [LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asian Centre](#). It marks the latest innovation from a long-term research collaboration between the University of York ([Felicia Liu](#), DEG), LSE ([Thomas Smith](#)), and Universiti Malaya ([Helena Varkkey](#)), interrogating the social and cultural dimensions of tropical environmental change. New academic and artistic partners are also on board in the project, namely [Jakob van Klang](#), Christopher Lyon (DEG, LCAB), and [British Council Malaysia](#), which is hosting the [Human-Nature Initiative](#) in tandem.

**This workshop strengthened knowledge exchange in three key dimensions:**

**1.** Connecting art, science, and activism

Participants stressed the need for equity and shared goals in collaboration. Art was seen as co-created knowledge to humanise climate science and inspire action.

**2.** Bridging Malaysia-UK environmentalism

The workshop addressed shared UK-Southeast Asia challenges. Malaysia's activism presents diverse voices, and provides globally relevant lessons for climate action in difficult political contexts.

**3.** Strengthening institutional partnerships

As part of a broader research collaboration between the University of York and the Universiti Malaya, it deepens ties between institutions and lays the groundwork for a co-developed framework guiding ethical, impactful art-science-activist collaborations.

## What's Next?

A second workshop will be held in York, UK on 20th June 2025, bringing together artists, activists, and researchers to share insights and shape new pathways for collaboration. If you'd like to join us, or know anyone who may be interested, please register via this [link](#).





# DRIVING INNOVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE: The AI SuperConnector Showcase



On 3rd April, the York Guildhall, once a gathering place for medieval merchants and city leaders, opened its doors to the AI SuperConnector Showcase. Conversation flowed beneath its stained glass and centuries-old stonework, and the future of AI technology took centre stage.

The AI SuperConnector programme, led by Imperial College London in collaboration with the Universities of York, Leeds, and Liverpool, supported academic researchers through a six month journey to accelerate their promising AI technologies into viable commercial solutions. The programme connects researchers to expert support in areas including intellectual property strategy, licensing, and spinout structuring, through targeted support, guidance and training.

The Showcase was a celebration of these journeys. Researchers had just three minutes to pitch their innovations to an audience of investors, policymakers, industry leaders, and entrepreneurs.

As the presentations gave way to networking, conversations began to bubble up immediately. Investors sought out researchers over food and drinks, probing details with insightful questions. Industry leaders explored how emerging technologies could align with real-world needs. Potential future founders gained knowledge from experienced entrepreneurs, hearing lessons about failing fast, building wisely, and staying the course.

While this event focused on artificial intelligence, the format highlights the role of knowledge exchange across the University. York hosts extraordinary research across areas

such as health, sustainability, social science and creative technologies. We have the chance to bring these strengths together and celebrate innovation through future events like this one, which remind us what can be achieved when we look at research from a new perspective.

Innovation does not need glass towers or glossy stages. Sometimes, it needs a centuries-old building that reminds us today's breakthroughs are built on the foundations of those that came before. In a place like the Guildhall, we are reminded that innovation relies on connection. When researchers, entrepreneurs, investors, industry leaders, and policymakers come together, ideas are strengthened, challenges are explored from new angles and real progress becomes possible.