



## Doctoral Journeys-Beyond the Doctorate: Sin-Wang Chong (Part 2)

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### Abstract

Part 1 of this series explored Sin-Wang Chong's doctoral journey before entering academia. This blog highlights his professional trajectory and academic identity, drawing on materials reported in Imanishi (2025a, 2025b; 2025c). It outlines the development of his research interests and highlights how his engagement with research synthesis—described as not only a method but also a way of understanding and organising knowledge (Chong & Chan, 2025)—has shaped his thinking. The post also reflects his views on mentorship, research impact, and researcher well-being, offering insights relevant to practitioner researchers, doctoral students, and early-career academics.

### Keywords

1. Research Synthesis
2. Researcher development
3. Academic mentorship
4. Inclusive academic communities
5. Researcher well-being
6. Academic blog and podcast

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the content of this blog post.



## Doctoral Journeys-Beyond the Doctorate: Sin-Wang Chong (Part 2)

Drawing on [an interview with Sin-Wang Chong](#) (Imanishi, 2025c), this article explores his professional journey beyond doctoral study, focusing on his research interests, transition into academia, and reflections on identity, impact, and well-being. In doing so, it also introduces key literature that resonates with themes discussed in the interview and offers reflections on how these ideas relate to my own development as a doctoral student and a teacher.

### Professional Journey

#### Research Interests

Sin-Wang synthesised his body of research from the perspective of feedback and assessment, recognising student feedback literacy, the capacity to seek, interpret, and use feedback for learning (Carless & Boud, 2018), as a unifying theme. By framing this within Exploratory Practice (Hanks, 2017), he saw how practitioner voices could be integrated into research (Chong, 2020). Sin-Wang's account reminded me that such threads become visible when we reflect deeply. What seems varied or disconnected may, in fact, be shaped by the beliefs and values formed across our lives, not only as teachers but as individuals.

#### Turning to Research Synthesis and the Synthetic Ethic

Repeated engagement with Norris and Ortega's (2006) work sparked his long-term interest in research synthesis as both method and epistemology, including their idea of a *synthetic ethic*—the responsibility to engage deeply with prior research and clarify how studies relate. As they describe it, research synthesis aims to produce systematic, comprehensive, and replicable understandings of an issue by integrating findings from primary research. The notion of a “synthetic ethic” reminded me of what I learned from interviews with experienced researchers in this *Doctoral Journeys – Beyond the Doctorate* series. They emphasised the importance of engaging with previous research and considering the positionality and value of one's own work. In this regard, conducting a research synthesis helped me identify my next steps.

#### Transition to Academia and Conditions for Growth

Sin-Wang entered higher education before completing his doctorate and emphasised the importance of institutional support, collegiality, and flexible working environments. He also highlighted the value of supportive academic communities, noting influential mentors such as Professor Icy Lee and Professor Hayo Reinders. His transition prompted me to reflect on my own future career. Since I became a doctoral student, I have seen how difficult school-based research can be for researchers and PhD students due to institutional restrictions. This made me aware of the value of research conducted in schools, while also recognising the limitations we face there—limited time, few research resources, and the absence of collegial research engagement.



### Researcher Mindset, Impact, and Identity

Sin-Wang seeks to foster dialogue across differing viewpoints and ensure that teachers, often marginalised in academic research, are recognised as contributors to knowledge production. He rejects the idea that only academics can produce knowledge and emphasises that research impact extends beyond publications and citation metrics, encouraging diverse and accessible forms of communication. Although I was surprised that teacher-led research is often undervalued, learning some researchers support it strengthened my desire to conduct research that reflect a teacher's perspective in my doctoral work. His commitment to accessible scholarship through his podcast, *Scholarly Peers* (Chong, 2023), also influenced my decision to develop this podcast and academic blog series. As outlined in Imanishi (2025a), the project integrates podcast interviews, academic blog posts, open peer review, and revised articles to show how they can function as a rigorous doctoral project. Direct, immediate feedback from listeners and readers worldwide has also been a meaningful form of impact, reaffirming the value of accessible scholarship.

### Messages for Early-Career Researchers

Supporting early-career researchers is central to Sin-Wang's work. He emphasised the importance of a balanced researcher identity, grounded in personal values, and encourages researchers to reflect on why they publish and for whom. Publication, he reminds, is the beginning rather than the end of research impact. He also noted that educational research rarely changes the world overnight; originality lies in steady, meaningful contributions. His own approach, doing "what little I can" with consistency, embodies this belief. He urged early-career researchers to trust the long-term value of their work, maintain confidence without arrogance, avoid imposter syndrome, and remember that supervisors are there to strengthen, not diminish, their efforts. At first, this seemed to conflict with his expectation that I publish at least one paper annually during my doctorate, and I initially found it challenging to reconcile the two. With his guidance, however, I published my first paper (Imanishi, 2025a) in the first year with SAJILE's support, marking the beginning of a multimodal doctoral project. As I entered the second year, I realised that he was encouraging me to move forward on my doctoral journey and clarify my personal values. In this sense, this project emerged in my first year as my version of "what little I can". Building on this, I actively shared the outcomes of the action research I conducted the past year through press releases. The work was subsequently featured in print both nationally and internationally. This experience helped me better understand his reminder that publication is just the beginning of research impact.

### Closing Reflection

Twenty years after Norris and Ortega (2006), Sin-Wang's edited volume *Research Synthesis Methodologies in Applied Linguistics* will soon be published by the same press. His journey demonstrates how persistence and curiosity can lead to meaningful scholarly contributions. His story not only teaches the value of such persistence but also the importance of purpose-driven research. This *Doctoral Journeys-Beyond the Doctorate* series represents a turning



point in my understanding of how to contribute meaningfully to the field, even from the first year of my doctoral journey.

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