

# Center for Leadership & Innovation

## A Rhodes Scholar Presentation



Toward knowledge obsolescence amongst scaffold 'master' craftsmen: the challenge of standardisation and occupational legitimacy

Date: 18 Apr 23 (Tue)

Time: 2:30 – 4:30 pm

Venue: Senate Room (M1603), PolyU Campus



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Understanding the meaning of work in high-risk contexts has tended to rely on narrowly-defined managerial and regulatory narratives of safety culture (eg Antonsen, 2009; Jahn, 2019; Peng & Chan, 2020). Rarely are the voices of frontline workers at the centre of high-risk activities heard, which poses a real challenge not only for creating safety regimes at work, but also for the retention of appropriate knowledge. Yet it is critical to understand this reality from the point of view of the social actors within it and who bear the brunt of its eventual dissipation. Recognizing that the knowledge management discipline rarely looks beyond formal office settings, we set out to investigate the relatively 'informal' and seemingly 'peripheral' context of construction work, in particular scaffold work where there are serious concerns about knowledge obsolescence in a sector which is ranked as the most or one of the most dangerous in terms of the risk of workplace accidents and mortality (eg Borys, 2012; Daudigeos, Jaumier, & Boutinot, 2016; Ju & Rowlinson, 2020). We examine how frontline workers in high-risk work contexts construct knowledge about safety, how they conceive of risk in an increasingly safety-conscious work environment, and how this world is now coming under threat. We draw lessons for the management of knowledge in other organizational contexts facing significant change.

**Ken Kamoche** was born and raised in Kenya. He is Professor of Human Resource Management and Organization Studies at the University of Nottingham, UK, where he also directs the Africa Research Group. Ken earned a BCom at the University of Nairobi, then proceeded to Oxford University where he earned a DPhil as a Rhodes Scholar. He has previously worked as Professor at Nottingham Trent University, Associate Professor at City University of Hong Kong and Lecturer at Birmingham University. Ken's research interests include talent and knowledge management, organisational improvisation, managing in emerging economies, and the Africa-Asia business nexus. His work has appeared in journals such as *Human Relations*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organisation Studies*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *British Journal of Management*, *Work, Employment and Society*, and the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. Ken has also authored/co-edited six books, including *Handbook of Chinese Business and Management*. London: Routledge, (forthcoming), *Effective People Management in Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan (2013), and *Managing Human Resources in Africa*, Routledge (2004).