



EDUCATION IN MODERN CHINA

R F PRICE

Education in Modern China

R. F. PRICE

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World education series

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World education series

The volumes in the *World Education Series* will treat national systems of education and, where appropriate, features of different systems within a particular region. These studies are intended to meet the needs of students of comparative education in university departments and schools of education and colleges of education and will supplement the growing volume of literature in the field. They may also appeal to a wider lay audience interested in education abroad.

As an area study of a national system each volume presents an accurate, reasonably up-to-date account of the most important features of the educational system described. Among these are the ways in which the school system is controlled, financed and administered. Some account is given of the various kinds of school within the system and the characteristics of each of them. The principles of curriculum organization and some aspects of teacher education are outlined. Of more interest, however, is the analysis which is made in each volume of the unique national characteristics of an educational system, seen in the context of its history and the sociological, economic and political factors which have in the past and continue now to influence educational policy.

The assumption behind the series is, however, that common socio-economic and educational problems find unique expression in a particular country or region, and that a brief analysis of some major national issues will reveal similarities and differences. Thus, while in each case the interpretation of policies and practices is based on the politics of education, the interpretative emphasis will vary from one country to another.

The framework of analysis for each volume is consequently the same, attention being drawn in the first section to the legal basis of educational provision, followed in the second section by an analysis of the political considerations which have and do influence the formulation, adoption and implementation of policy. The role of political parties is described where appropriate and the influence of

the church or churches on policy examined. Attention too is given to the activities of pressure groups at national, regional and local levels. Changing industrial, urban and familial patterns are used to show how educational needs are in process of change and what difficulties arise when innovations are attempted. Again, each author touches on the extent to which economic resources affect the implementation of policy. The analysis relates principally to the twenty-year period between 1945 and 1965 but relevant aspects of the pre-Second World War period are described and the chains of events are seen in historical perspective.

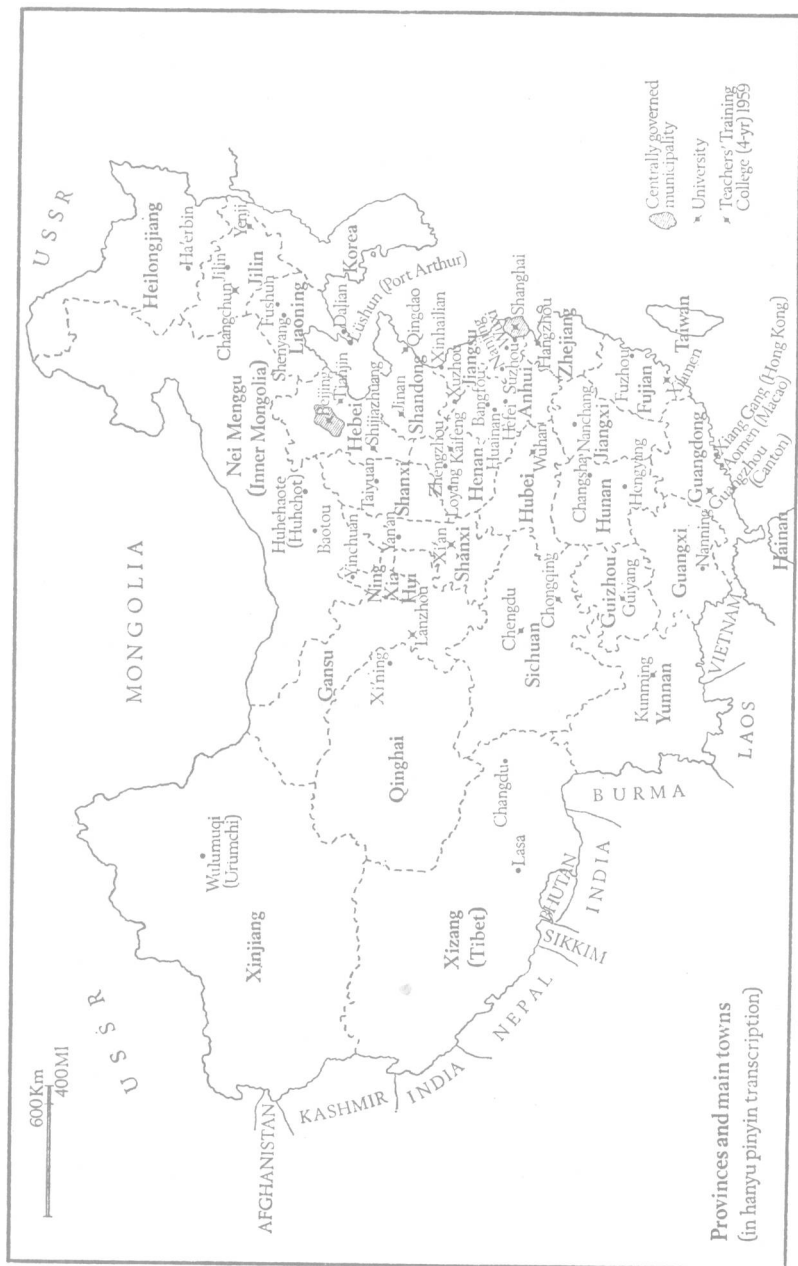
Finally, in the third section some account is given of problems which arise within the educational system itself. Those which appear to the author of particular interest and importance have been treated in some depth. Others have been referred to so that readers may consult other sources of information if they wish. Broad problem areas in education have, however, been identified. The points of transition within a system between the first and second and between the second and third stages of education give rise to problems of selection and allocation. Under conditions of expansion, created by explosions of population and aspirations, traditional solutions are often thought to be no longer adequate. The attempts made to meet these new situations are described. So too are the relationships and debates about them, between the various types of school at different levels of education. For example what are the possibilities of transfer between academic, general and technical/vocation schools at the second stage of education? And where these different types have been replaced by some form of common or comprehensive school what kinds of differentiation exist within the single school? At the third level of higher education what relationships exist between institutions providing general education, professional training and research opportunities? In some systems a form of dual control is growing up with the universities retaining much of their traditional autonomy and the technological institutes and teacher education institutions increasingly feeling the influence of government agencies. Again, after a process of differentiation in course content in the first stage of higher education there is now a tendency for the first year (or two) of college or university work to be regarded as a preparatory year (or years) with common or somewhat similar courses of studies for all students.

Particular attention has been paid to the problems which arise in the area of teacher education. Movements in most countries are in the direction of bringing together the previously separate systems of training for elementary and secondary school teachers. Common entrance prerequisites to different training institutions may now be required. Where this is not yet the case training colleges usually make it possible for students to obtain, during the course of their studies, a certificate which grants entry to the university and highest (in prestige and status) forms of teacher education. The place of teacher education in the structure of higher education is, in short, discussed in each of the volumes. So are debates about curricular content and methods of certification.

Finally, some attention is given to the interaction of the schools and other social agencies. Among these the health services, youth organizations, the family, the Church, industry and commerce have been regarded as important. Where special note is not taken of such institutions the impact they have in the schools is dealt with throughout the volume as a whole.

The framework in short is intended to facilitate cross cultural studies through the series as a whole. Basic educational legislation is referred to in the belief that it gives the most reliable and valid source of national goals or aims in education. The problems of putting these into effective action are socio-economic-political and educational. Comparisons can be made, therefore, between the aims of education as expressed in national legislation and between the main factors which inhibit or facilitate practical provisions in accordance with these aims.

BRIAN HOLMES
General Editor



General editor's introduction

The educational system of ancient China had as its principal aim the selection and training of civil servants. The content of instruction was based to a very considerable extent on the classics, which were subjected to careful literary analysis. Much had to be memorized and attempts to moderate examinations as objectively as possible restricted the kind of questions which could be asked to those which could be marked satisfactorily. The social aims of the system of civil service examinations were to restrict nepotism and to draw into the Imperial service able young men from the villages.

The influence of this system in the educational systems of Europe has been considerable. The civil service *concours* of France and the competitive entrance examinations in England reflect this tradition. The treatment of classical literature and its central position in the curriculum in European schools represent the same kind of approach to education.

Against this background should be seen the efforts of the present leaders of China to reform the school system. It would be a mistake simply to assume that directives from a powerful central government can be passed down through the system and implemented by teachers in the classroom. The acceptance of an ideology does not mean that practice will follow it automatically. Among the obstacles preventing or slowing down reform should be counted traditional ideologies and well established schools. The Communist government in China has had to face a powerful heritage.

It was also faced with difficulties due to the size and diversity of the country and its population. Communications, still rudimentary in many areas, the variety of spoken languages, and the complications of the written language, continue to create problems for implementing policy. The traditional family structure has also to be taken into account when trying to explain the reasons for an apparently slow rate of progress towards a system of schools more closely in line with Communist theory.

General Editor's Introduction

It should also be remembered that during their first decade of power the Communist leaders had little time to formulate educational policy. During the last ten years more attention has been paid to education. Among Party leaders and educationists opinion has been divided. Radical and conservative points of view have been strongly expressed as part of the Cultural Revolution. Mao's contributions to these debates have been considerable. The practical outcomes of them are, at the moment, matters of conjecture. One thing is certain, however, the radical transformation of an old and respected system of education will take many decades of effort to achieve.

Mr. Price is well qualified to analyse the educational implications of the Cultural Revolution and the difficulties which face Mao in his attempts to introduce new educational policies. The author spent two years in Peking, teaching English, and had access to many documents and sources of information extremely difficult to consult outside China. His analysis of Mao's Thoughts on the nature of man, society and knowledge is against the philosophical assumptions of the classical Chinese tradition. He shows how Communist government educational policies have had to face the inertia of pre-World War II schools strongly influenced by foreign practice. In the third section of this volume Mr. Price gives detailed accounts of the full and part-time systems of education.

Like other volumes in the *World education series* this book should be regarded as a case study in the reform of education. In the case of China the problems are particularly fascinating because so many factors are involved in the analysis of tradition and change. Violent changes have occurred in the political and economic spheres of Chinese life under the Communist government. The power of the cultural heritage is considerable. The energy and skill of the people involved in the transformation of their society are well known. This volume has been written at a crucial stage in the process. Education may go in any of several directions. Readers will be in a good position to judge what these possibilities are after reading Mr. Price's careful and detailed study.

The audience for which this book is intended is wide. Comparative educationists, students of education, teachers and interested laymen should find it very useful and extremely readable. So little is known of education in China, however, that it was felt desirable

General Editor's Introduction

to document this volume more fully than some of the others in the series. As a result it should appeal to students in the field of Chinese studies.

It admirably meets the aims of comparative education. Readers will note, for example, that China faces similar problems of reform to those which exist in Western Europe and the USSR. It also reveals many facets of the problems which arise when selective cultural borrowing is attempted. Finally some deeper understanding of the processes of education may be gained from a careful reading of the section which deals with the schools and part-time education.

The lay-out follows the usual pattern. The first section deals with policy and the important debates going on; the next section analyses the major obstacles to reform and the third section gives details of schools, how they are organized, what kind of curricula are provided, how they are financed, and how teachers are trained. The volume it is hoped will be of general interest to educationists and will provoke more studies into a fascinating system of education.

General editor's introduction to second edition

The survival of traditional values and beliefs depends heavily on the power of educationists to maintain them in spite of political and economic changes. It is not often that we are given the opportunity to observe the survival power of education in dramatic form. Dr Price's new chapter introduces us not only to the players but to the events in the drama which followed the death of Chairman Mao in 1976. It adds a new dimension to our understanding of the role of education in a society which under the leadership of men and women of vision has changed greatly in many respects. It should not come as a surprise to comparative education to discover how resilient education is and how much it draws on tradition for its strength.

BRIAN HOLMES

Preface

Going to China was for the writer the culmination of boyhood dreams and diverse adult interests: an exciting event only marred by the political obstacles to fuller participation in Chinese life. In this book I have tried both to stand back and analyse, and to give something of my subjective feeling for China and its problems.

It was perhaps as an aid to the imagination that my stay in China was most useful, rather than for any particular information I was able to acquire. I gained the lasting advantage of a key to the interpretation of the large quantity of material which is available in the West. Made available either directly by the official Chinese news and publicity agencies, or by the excellent abstracting and monitoring services of such bodies as the B.B.C. and the U.S. Consulate-General, Hong Kong, newspaper articles, speeches and letters appear in a language guaranteed for misunderstanding. Where the English go in for understatement, the Chinese prefer colourful metaphor, often taken from their ancient literature. Certain fixed phrases are repeated endlessly so that to English ears they sound insincere and even ridiculous. In the pages ahead some of the quotations reveal this difference in the way our two languages express ideas.

When the writer first began to read about China a major difficulty was remembering the names of people and places, so short and so alike to the untrained eye. It was for this reason that an appendix was included, giving some help with pronunciation and transcriptions. A few minutes spent studying this appendix should help those readers who have similar difficulties. A map is also provided, using the same transcription as the text, frequent consultation of which should help to fix the place names in space. The time chart, which contains those people and events most closely connected with the main argument of the book, will, it is hoped, also help to make matters clearer.

Preface

Were I to name all those who have helped me, directly or indirectly, with the writing of this book the list would be very long. I can only say that I am very conscious of the debt I owe, and of the difficulty of making a worthy acquittance.

May I thank the librarians and their staffs of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, the Institute of Education of the University of London, and the Tate Library, Streatham, in the Borough of Lambeth. I am also indebted to the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding whose sets of bound volumes of Chinese journals published in English and other books and pamphlets proved an easily accessible store of information.

R. F. PRICE

Abbreviations

Organizations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CC CCP	Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
NCNA	New China News Agency
PLA	People's Liberation Army
YCL	Young Communist League
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Publications

The following are English-language translations prepared by the United States Consulate General in Hong Kong:

CB	Current Background
ECMM	Extracts from China Mainland Magazines
SCMP	Survey of China Mainland Press
EPMC	An Economic Profile of Mainland China, being Studies prepared for the Joint Economic Committee of Congress of the United States, U.S. Printing Office, 1967.
JPRS	Translations by the Joint Publications Research Service, Washington, D.C.

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I

Educational aims and the thoughts of Mao Ze-dong

The Cultural Revolution of 1966

In the autumn of 1965, in the sixteenth year of the People's Republic of China, the first verbal hand-grenades were thrown in what was to become known as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (*wuchan-jieji wenhua da geming*). The *Shanghai Literary Gazette* published on 10 November an attack on the writer and vice-mayor of Peking, Wu Han, which was reprinted by the *Liberation Army Daily* on 29 November, and by the *People's Daily* on the 30th. In the spring of 1966 this was widened into an attack on various writers and historians. Guided and stimulated by articles and editorials in the *Liberation Army Daily*, the *People's Daily* and *Red Flag*, what at first appeared to be just another rectification campaign moved, in the form of posters, on to the walls of the colleges and schools, and finally into the streets in the form of massive demonstrations in July 1966.

The struggle was not something which suddenly began in 1965. Its roots, uncovered in the course of the movement, go back through the 1950s to Yan'an (Yenan). Differences of emphasis which could co-exist at one period gradually accumulated until open struggle became necessary if one trend was not to be submerged.

During the two confused years which followed it became clear that education in its widest sense was central to the struggle being waged between Mao Ze-dong and his supporters, and that often shadowy 'handful of people in the Party taking the capitalist road'. While the debate did not raise any essentially new issues, it posed certain old ones in a particularly sharp manner and forced people to take a firm stand on one side or the other. At the same time it threw a clearer light on the events of the previous decade and a half during