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Citizenship Education in China

Preparing Citizens for the "Chinese Century"

Edited by

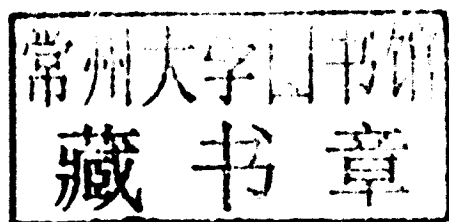
Kerry J. Kennedy, Gregory P. Fairbrother,
and Zhao Zhenzhou



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Citizenship Education in China

There is a flourishing literature on citizenship education in China that is mostly unknown in the West. Liberal political theorists often assume that only in democracy should citizens be prepared for their future responsibilities, yet citizenship education in China has undergone a number of transformations as the political system has sought to cope with market reforms, globalization and pressures both externally and within the country for broader political reforms. Over the past decade, Chinese scholars have been struggling for official recognition of citizenship education as a key component of the school curriculum in these changing contexts. This book analyzes the citizenship education issues under discussion within China, and aims to provide a voice for its scholars at a time when China's international role is becoming increasingly important.

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Routledge Series on Schools and Schooling in Asia

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Preparing Citizens for the
“Chinese Century”

*Edited by Kerry J. Kennedy,
Gregory P. Fairbrother, and
Zhao Zhenzhou*

Kerry dedicates this book to Zoe, Jamie, Oliver, Henry and Rose—citizens of the future.

Greg dedicates this book to Sean.

Zhenzhou dedicates this book to Zhi—also a citizen of the future.

Series Editor's Note

The so called "Asian century" provides opportunities and challenges both for the people of Asia as well as in the West. The success of many of Asia's young people in schooling often leads educators in the West to try and emulate Asian school practices. Yet these practices are culturally embedded. One of the key issues to be taken on by this series, therefore, is to provide Western policymakers and academics with insights into these culturally embedded practices in order to assist better understanding of them outside of specific cultural contexts.

There is vast diversity as well as disparities within Asia. This is a fundamental issue and for the reason and it will be addressed in this series by making these diversities and disparities the subject of investigation. The 'tiger' economies initially grabbed most of the media attention on Asian development and more recently China has become the centre of attention. Yet there are also very poor countries in the region and their education systems seem unable to be transformed to meet new challenges. Pakistan is a case in point. Thus the whole of Asia will be seen as important for this series in order to address not only questions relevant to developed countries but also to developing countries. In other words, the series will take a 'whole of Asia' approach.

Asia can no longer be considered in isolation. It is as subject to the forces of globalization, migration and transnational movements as other regions of the world. Yet the diversity of cultures, religions and social practices in Asia means that responses to these forces are not predictable. This series, therefore, is interested to identify the ways tradition and modernity interact to produce distinctive contexts for schools and schooling in an area of the world that impacts across the globe.

Against this background, the current volume makes a welcome addition to the *Routledge Series on Schools and Schooling in Asia*.

Kerry J. Kennedy
Series Editor
Routledge Series on Schools and Schooling in Asia

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1 Introduction

Educating Chinese Citizens for the “Chinese Century”—Views from the Inside

Kerry J. Kennedy

It may seem somewhat cliché to talk of the “Chinese century”, a term about which there is little agreement among scholars (Doctoroff 2012). Yet that China has indisputably emerged since the 1980s as a powerful economic force on the world stage; that its army and navy are now playing high-profile roles on the international stage; and that its leaders have made prodigious efforts over this time to promote China as a player on the world stage are all well-known phenomena in the second decade of the 21st century. They are all plain indicators that China has become a world power that must be taken into consideration when it comes to global and social politics.

But China is not just any power. It is one of those countries that have openly resisted the tide of democratisation that swept much of Europe after 1989, and it has maintained a one-party state for 60 years. As Fairbrother points out in this volume, much of the activity of this one-party state is dedicated to legitimising the role of the Chinese Communist Party as the defender and protector of its citizens—a role little different from that of the many dynasties that ruled over China prior to 1911. Yet as Tan, also in this volume, points out, China’s needs are no longer for a single national identity but one that is more fitting for its global role as its citizens face the outside world through globalisation, technology, or travel. Thus the education of citizens in this one-party state presents new challenges as the opening up of China proceeds at a pace that defies even the Party’s enormous capacity for monitoring and control.

One of the problems for Western citizenship education scholars is trying to understand how citizenship education is both constructed and practised in China, or indeed in any context that differs from the Western norm. Part of this problem is related to language, but an important part is also related to culture, history, and politics. Some important attempts have been made to provide Western scholars with insights into citizenship education in Mainland China, and these have come from multiple sources. They are important to understand as a prelude to the forthcoming chapters in this book. What follows is by no means exhaustive, but it attempts to present what is already known through the identified sources.

One important source of knowledge has been Chinese scholars, working either on the Mainland or in the West contributing to the Western literature in English. Li, Zhong, Lin, and Zhang (2004) introduced ideas about moral education in China, an area closely related to citizenship education and at times indistinguishable from it. Feng (2006) discussed the intercultural contexts of citizenship education in China and made the important point that such ideas are confined to academics and do not play a significant role in either policy or practice. Wan (2007) also contributed to the global discourse on diversity to explain how Chinese citizenship education influences China's many ethnic minorities. Zhu and Feng (2008) provided important insights into the theoretical foundations of citizenship education on the Mainland. It was clear from their discussion that citizenship education in China was deeply embedded in historical constructions as well as modern ideological purposes. They provided an interesting comparison with Western ideas and stressed the similarities with Chinese thinking rather than the differences. Zhao and Fairbrother (2010) provided important insights into pedagogies and classroom strategies used in citizenship education, specially those supported by Mainland academics the focus of whose work was at once theoretical and practical. Finally, at a conference convened in London by the Institute of Education and Beijing Normal University, a number of important papers were presented by Mainland teachers and scholars demonstrating the extent to which issues such as globalisation, patriotism, and other contemporary challenges are being seriously debated as part of the discourse of citizenship education (Shi 2010; Wang and Jiang 2010; Kan 2010).

These have all been important contributions introducing ideas about Chinese citizenship education to the West, and they have provided significant insights, but they are limited in scope and number. Of course, there is also an indigenous literature on Chinese citizenship education as shown on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) website (http://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTOTAL-BJJY200607001.htm). Yet for Western monolinguals, language becomes a barrier to this indigenous literature.

Another source of information on Chinese citizenship education is Hong Kong Chinese scholars. They have made important contributions to citizenship education scholarship by seeking to understand and interpret Asian perspectives in general and Chinese perspectives in particular. Tse and Lee (2003) provided important insights not just about the citizenship curriculum but the way schools are organised, the role of the Chinese Communist Party in schools, and in particular the ways in which moral, civic, and ideological education are intertwined with the life of Mainland schools. Lee (2004a, 2004b) highlighted significant ideas about Asian conceptions of citizenship, an area that has opened up important cultural understandings about citizenship in general and citizenship education in particular. Lee and Ho (2005) provided some critical insights into moral education on the Mainland and its ideological meanings in a very revealing article that

clarifies the link between moral and citizenship education. Lee (2005) surveyed teachers in three Chinese cities, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong, to provide some comparative perspectives between the politicised nature of citizenship education on the Mainland and its depoliticised nature in Hong Kong. Following on from this, Lee and Leung (2006) sought to better understand how teachers in Hong Kong and Shanghai understood ideas relating to global citizenship education in these two Chinese cities, with the surprising finding that Shanghai teachers appeared to be more globally oriented than those in Hong Kong. Lee and Ho (2008) also explored at some length emerging trends in citizenship education in Mainland China. Lee also worked with Mainland Chinese scholars to provide insights into major trends characterising the changing nature of citizenship education in China (Zhong and Lee 2008). Law (2011) sought to integrate understanding about social change in China with ideas about citizenship education practices at different levels of the political system. In this major publication, he brought together much of his earlier work in the field (e.g., Law and Ng [2009], Law [2010, 2007, 2006]), where he has been a major analyst of Mainland citizenship education. These have all made important contributions by bringing significant ideas about Chinese citizenship education to Western audiences. Yet apart from the studies co-authored with Mainland scholars, these were views from the outside rather than from the inside. They sought to interpret what was happening from a distance rather than as part of the system.

Another body of work has been that of Western scholars seeking to understand China's citizenship education. Gilliom (1978) introduced to the West basic ideas and principles about citizenship education in Maoist China based on personal observations and assessments and with a querying tone of why citizenship education was not taken more seriously in the West. His presentation was more anecdotal than analytical, but it highlighted a world view in which citizenship education was the rationale for the whole of education and not just a separate subject in the school curriculum. In a similar way Lawrence (2000) provided an anecdotal account of citizenship education practices on the Mainland based on his experiences as an English teacher. Like Gilliom before him, he described not just lessons and instruction, but the entire regimen of school life that he saw as being devoted to citizenship preparation. Fairbrother (2004a) also used his school experience in China to provide a rich and vivid picture of life in a Chinese middle school with citizenship education practices both inside and outside the classroom. More analytical work came later, for example when Fairbrother (2003) reported on a major study comparing the attitudes of Hong Kong and Mainland students to the respective citizenship education processes in the two places. His main finding was that some students in both places "resisted" what they saw as dominant discourses and exercised agency in a way often underestimated by authorities. He coined the term "critical patriotism" to describe how many of the university students saw

the outcomes of their citizenship education. This work was replicated with new samples of students (Fairbrother 2008) with similar results relating to agency and resistance on the part of university students to different forms of citizenship education.

Using a different methodology, Fairbrother (2004b) compared civic textbooks in China and Taiwan to demonstrate a convergence in the approaches to citizenship education by the two Chinese societies despite considerable ideological divergence. Textbooks in both places played a very important role in portraying political values and views of the state. In another semi-comparative piece that focused largely on Hong Kong, Fairbrother (2006) outlined the characteristics of citizenship education in China to show how the greatest concern of many Hong Kong policy-makers was with the “indoctrination” they associated with Mainland educational practices.

Overall, these studies have provided important glimpses into citizenship education in Mainland China. The link between its ideological nature and the Chinese Communist Party, its basis as a whole school approach supporting a socialist world view, and its potential to “mould” citizens along predetermined lines are all unmistakable. Yet it is also possible to see spaces in which individuals have created possibilities for alternative thinking, whether it is through innovative pedagogies, student resistance to perceived attempts at indoctrination, or efforts to link national and global citizenship. Thus the picture is neither simple nor unidimensional. The editors of this book also believe it is incomplete—a partial picture that can be further illuminated by listening to some new voices.

The voices we have chosen to be included in this volume are largely those of Mainland scholars who do not often publish in English, with the addition of some Hong Kong and Western scholars who continue to make an important contribution to the field. In commissioning the chapters, the editors encouraged contributors to submit their work in either English or Chinese. Around two thirds of the chapters were submitted in English, with the remainder in Chinese. These latter were then translated, edited, and sent back to the authors for checking. We hope that in this way we have been able to add some new voices to the conversation and illuminate the emerging picture of citizenship education in Mainland China.

The chapters solicited for the book fall into three main thematic areas:

- Theory, history, and current debates
- Local and global perspectives
- Curriculum and learning issues

THEORY, HISTORY, AND CURRENT DEBATES

While the reader does not need to be an expert in Chinese history to understand the chapters in this section, some passing knowledge of the phases

in recent years (at least the last 150!) will be helpful. This should not be surprising since citizenship education (alternatively referred to in these chapters as civic education and moral education) is grounded in its social and historical contexts. Fairbrother provides what is essentially a “grand narrative” that seeks to integrate dynastic, Republican, and current conceptions of citizenship education in China. Xu, on the other hand, focuses on the Republican period, seeking to show how the transition from “subject” to “citizen” began but was not completed in that period. Qin briefly looks at the Republican period, but his focus is on the transition to the People’s Republic of China. What is surprising is that while ideologies are constantly changing (even in the Republican period), the role and function of citizenship education does not. It is front and centre at all times, seen as an essential process for securing the ideological purposes of its different adherents. Qin also shows the continuity of moral education from the earliest times through to the modern PRC (a point also made by Fairbrother). Jiang and Xu also focus on moral education (sometimes used interchangeably with ideopolitical education, civic education, and political education, particularly in different periods of China’s post-1949 development) but in the higher education sector rather than schools. They point to serious gaps in policy and practice but make it very clear that such education in universities is supported to the point at which specific courses are credit bearing and compulsory for all students. The tension between the importance accorded civic education at the policy level and its implementation is a key feature of Jiang and Xu’s chapter. The chapter ends with a discussion of national and world citizens and the importance of this distinction to China as it continues the opening-up process.

LOCAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Yu Tianlong’s chapter starts off this section with a review of why “world citizenship education” is needed in today’s China and the issues that seem to work against it. These issues are somewhat more complex than in the West, but the debate will be a familiar one to readers. Law Wing-Wah takes up the very interesting issue of how Shanghai’s hosting of the World Expo in 2010 was deliberately linked to citizenship education and China’s rising status on the global stage. From the point of view of students, he provides a glimpse of how the Expo influenced their own views of their country after such an event. Pan Suyan takes a look at citizenship education from the local perspective by examining initiatives of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission at around the time of the 2008 Olympics and includes teacher responses to what she describes as a liberalised policy environment. She also provides a rare glimpse of citizenship education pedagogies as narrated by teacher descriptions of what happens in schools (e.g., at assemblies) and in classrooms. Chen Yangguang’s chapter on language and

citizenship concludes this section with an historical review of the importance of language to the very notion of China as a “nation”. Yet the current push for the closer integration of China with the global community has also led to a focus on bilingualism (especially the teaching of English), and so the question of whether this leads to a more global view citizenship is explored. Any discussion of language education, of course, immediately leads to consideration of the school curriculum, and that is the focus of the final section of the book.

CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM: TEXTBOOKS AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Tan Chuanbao’s chapter starts off this section with an expansive view of the school curriculum and citizenship education’s role within it. More than just a school subject, citizenship education is seen to pervade the whole curriculum and indeed the whole process of China’s educational reform and modernisation. Citizenship education is viewed largely as a “democratic project” that is also understood to be the end goal of education itself. Wang Dongxiao traces the relationship between the different forms of “citizenship education” (civic education, moral education, and ideological and political education). He highlights the importance of “civic awareness” in the social, political, and economic contexts that define the new China. Wang Xiaofei and Tan Chuanbao examine the way in which textbooks have been used in moral education (understood in its broadest sense) at different stages in the history of the PRC. They focus particularly on the reforms of the current century and attempt to make moral education more relevant to the life experiences of students. They discuss a number of surveys of teachers and students to show how information on the impact of moral education has been collected in order to make better decisions about the kind of textbooks that will be effective for students. Their review shows clearly the ideological use of textbooks and how changing ideologies lead to different kinds of texts. Zhao Zhenzhou reports on the latest trends related to university student volunteerism and the different forms that this takes. She highlights the intermeshing of the ideological purposes of state-controlled volunteering activities and links these to new forms of citizenship education in a state-controlled environment.

Together, these chapters provide not just an overview of citizenship education in the new China but also insights into its historical development and some sense of the changing policy scenarios and debates that have characterised that development and the role of Chinese academics in shaping these policies in the context of a single-party state. Why is this important?

Grossman (2010) indicated in his review of citizenship education curriculum in Asia and the Pacific that he had focused on those countries characterised by “liberal democratic” political systems. This was a

perfectly reasonable way to frame the country cases he finally brought together, but it ignored one salient fact: Liberal democracies are not the only states that adopt citizenship education, as shown in the chapters here. Authoritarian regimes have their purposes for citizenship education, and an unexplored question is how these purposes are similar to and different from the purposes of citizenship education in liberal democracies or indeed in any type of political system. It was Aristotle (*Politics*, Book 8, Section 1) who observed:

No one will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth; for the neglect of education does harm to the constitution. The citizen should be moulded to suit the form of government under which he lives. For each government has a peculiar character which originally formed and which continues to preserve it. The character of democracy creates democracy, and the character of oligarchy creates oligarchy; and always the better the character, the better the government.

Little is known about the way in which “the form of government” shapes citizenship education, and it is hoped that this volume will shed some light on the phenomenon. This objective should not be seen as an endorsement of either alternative forms of government or the citizenship education programs they develop. But understanding them is important in terms of their rationale, the policy contexts that produce them, their reception in schools and the community, and the results. Comparative studies are also important. How do different conceptions of the state shape citizenship education, and how effective is such education in different social and economic contexts? This book has not explored these issues specifically but hopefully has provided a foundation for further work. In this sense, what is offered here is the beginning of what might become extended explorations of citizenship education in a unique context.

More needs to be known about the specific context addressed by this book and other such contexts if the field of citizenship education is to mature. Aristotle’s assertion that “neither must we suppose that any one of the citizens belongs to himself, for they all belong to the state, and are each of them a part of the state, and the care of each part is inseparable from the care of the whole” (*Politics*, Book 8, Section 1) may seem so far from the liberal ideal as to be easily dismissed. Yet some contexts in the Middle East, parts of Central Asia, Russia, China, and even the “soft democracies” of Southeast Asia would seem to have taken much of Aristotle at his word. Citizenship education can only be broadly and deeply understood when all of these contexts have been explored, as China has been in this book. By no means does this volume represent the last word of such a significant undertaking, but it is hoped that it may stimulate the scholarship on citizenship education, leading to debates and discussions that will