

Review article: *Citizenship Education in China: Preparing Citizens for the “Chinese Century”*.

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Kennedy, K. J., Fairbrother, G.P., and Zhao Zhenzhou (2014) *Citizenship Education in China: Preparing Citizens for the “Chinese Century”* Abingdon and New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-50272-6

In the case of China, political education has been viewed as fundamental to the socialisation of young people into the core doctrines of the People’s Republic since its foundation. Yet it must now address a generation of young people experiencing capitalist individualism, alongside paternalistic collectivism. In *Citizenship Education in China: Preparing Citizens for the “Chinese Century”*, Kerry Kennedy brings together mainland Chinese scholars who do not normally publish in English with those from Hong Kong and the West to provide a compendious overview of the state of the field. The volume begins with two contrasting entries. Fairbrother presents a story of remarkable continuity in the Chinese state’s concern with the people’s moral education. Good governance in China has meant stability and social order, and this is maintained by a paternalistic state. Imperial Confucianism established an ideological orthodoxy that ever since has seen the Chinese state intervene to instil in people the values and legitimacy of a system of political-cultural paternalistic governance and the system of duties, obligations, and mores that this lays down. This ‘rule by morality’ continues to be seen in state directives on strengthening and improving ‘political, ideological, moral, patriotic, and legal education’ (p.25). Conversely, Xu argues that what has come to be understood as civic education was a response to the threat from the West in the early modern period, and the desire to forge a national character that could resist Western domination. In effect, it was part of a process of modernisation and nation-building that meant incorporating Western concepts of ‘the people’, ‘the nation’ and ‘the citizen’. Modern state sponsored civic education particularly developed during the May 4th Movement and the rise of a forthright and distinctive Chinese nationalism. For Xu, the modern period has meant a transformation from subjects to citizens, yet drawing on national cultural traditions to foster a distinctive Chinese civic personality (p. 39). Qin outlines a comprehensive programme for civic education reform in China drawing on tradition, ideological education and the practices of other countries. This is a conservative agenda focused on ‘developing civic qualities, and shaping modern citizens who have virtues and are aware of their responsibilities and obligations’ (p.51). Its central tenets are national socialist unity, civilised behaviour, Chinese culture and servicing society. Nevertheless Qin rejects ‘traditional force-feeding pedagogy’ in favour of more heuristic approaches that can connect with pupils. This seems particularly pertinent considering that by the time they are in college and universities, according to Jiang and Xu, students have disengaged from political and ideological education. While Qin wishes to distinguish civic education from political and ideological education, Jiang and Xu argue that these differences are meaningless as the curriculum has been dominated by the latter. Their aim is to recover the independence of moral education ‘with a focus on practice and connecting to the daily

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lives of students' (p.70). They also make a bid for world citizenship claiming that it is inherently consistent with national citizenship (p. 80). Criticising its neglect in existing higher education policy, Jiang and Xu argue that 'it is necessary to develop the younger generations into citizens of the world' if China is to adapt to its new global role (p. 82). They are surely right, yet their view that world citizenship is inherently consistent with national citizenship suggests a more exclusive conception than is generally favoured in the citizenship literature.

This is not the perspective of Yu who is far more critical of Chinese moral education, which he considers to be in crisis. Recent reforms have either taken a traditional turn emphasising national loyalty and respect for authority, or focused on the individual and seen character building as the solution to perceived problems of moral decline. In contrast to the nationalistic and moralistic agendas a new moral education, Yu proposes an approach to citizenship education founded upon the rethinking of patriotism and social justice. On this view, true patriotism is not about loyalty to government but to 'our home, our country and the moral community made up of our fellow citizens' (p. 94). Moral education for social justice should address inequalities of power and wealth and the forms of group based oppression that underlie them such as ethnic discrimination, classism, sexism and homophobia. This is an argument for a critical world citizenship rooted in virtues that are not particular to any one nation, but grounded in an appreciation of the tensions and conflicts that face citizens in contexts of injustice and inequality. In terms of its clarity of argument and vision, the chapter stands out as one of the strongest in the collection.

The remaining chapters in part 2 explore the possibilities and limitations of realising world citizenship through the examination of specific cases and examples. Law presents findings from a study of how the Shanghai World Exposition (SWE) of 2010 affected school children's perceptions of global, national and local citizenship. The hosting of the SWE was an opportunity for China and Shanghai to introduce a multidimensional citizenship education project, which included a range of initiatives such as the publication of three readers to be used in schools. A content analysis of the readers together with a survey of over 900 students and 30 interviews provided the data for the research. While the strengthening of young people's appreciation of global citizenship emerges as a finding, the main conclusion from the study was the extent to which SWE was used to promote national and city pride. Indeed, a particularly strong sense of Shanghai identity emerges amongst those who were established residents of the city suggesting the SWE reinforced existing ethnic identities rather than promoted a new cosmopolitan citizenship. In a similar vein, Pan examines the promotion of multi-level citizenship during China's hosting of major world event, in this case the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The main conclusion here is that while the Beijing Municipal Education Commission liberalised their policy on citizenship education both in terms of pedagogy and content, this was not followed through at the school level. The opportunity was available for Beijing Schools to develop a multilevel framework of citizenship education including global, national and local dimensions, and to be delivered by a more student focused, participative approach. Nevertheless, Pan's central argument is that schools and teachers did not take up the offer, and continued to deliver a conservative curriculum focused on nationalism and patriotism, employing passive teacher-centred methods. The constraints of a system designed for political socialisation, and teachers who knew little else meant that the gap between liberal policy proposals and implementation was simply too wide. Conversely, Chen's discussion of bilingualism demonstrates how language policy has

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become a key vehicle for promoting global citizenship. The widespread use of English has been essential to globalisation, and is acknowledged as imperative to individual and national success. The recognition of the importance of English has been central to China becoming part of the global economy. China has the largest English language speaking population in the world, and it is the most widely taught foreign language (p.153). Schools and universities have become key sites for developing global citizenship education, as the learning of English can deepen students' appreciation of difference and diversity and enhance intercultural understanding. Chen presents a major shift in citizenship education away from nationally focused political and moral education towards a skills centred global-citizen education geared to economic competitiveness.

Part 3 shifts the focus to textbooks and learning activities, albeit the first two chapters are quite broadly conceived. Tan places citizenship education at the heart of Chinese modernisation, as central to the process of human transformation that is a necessary adjunct to social transformation. In an Hegelian sense we are witnessing the transformation of Chinese subjects into world-historical citizens, and this is enabled through educational democratisation. Tan emphasises 'education through citizenship', active participation in public life in the school and wider community. However, he is also keen to stress that citizenship education concerns the whole of society and should therefore include adults. It is both an historical necessity and is of practical urgency in building a socialist democratic politics and a harmonious society. If for Tan citizenship education is still in its initial stages, the next chapter by Wang argues that this is in part addressed by its disciplinary institutionalisation. As such the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the state of the discipline, summarising key research and developments and emphasising its importance to the progress of citizenship education. Wang's focus is not world citizenship or democratisation but a national citizenship education firmly adapted for China, and traditional Chinese culture, where state allegiances and civic identities are mutually compatible. The evidence suggests a shift towards the civic dimension, and this is confirmed by Wang and Tan's discussion of changes to textbooks. They argue that new textbooks are indicative of a changed relationship between teacher, text and the student: 'not top-down and indoctrinating but equal and dialogic' (p. 204). A key feature is the emphasis on conflict and its resolution, enabling the examination of rights and values through meaningful debate and discussion. The opportunity to put citizenship skills into practise may arise for those who go onto higher education. In the book's penultimate chapter, Zhao discusses the volunteering activities that are available in Chinese Universities. These are extensive with University students constituting nearly half of China's 30 million youth volunteers (p. 209). Activities range from development work in foreign countries and regions of China, to participating in large-scale government events such as exhibitions and sporting events, to working with non-governmental organisations, either international, national and local. The first two are dominated by the party-state machinery, which fund and organise projects and events and oversee recruitment and selection, while the third involves a partnership between government-party and the NGO, which offer the volunteer greater autonomy. In general, the focus is on service to either country, government or society and volunteers are not expected to be activists for issues and campaigns, or advocates for the rights of disadvantaged groups. Nevertheless, this may change with the growth of NGOs, bilingualism and international experiences, along with the liberalising of citizenship education documented elsewhere in the book. As Zhao points out volunteering embodies the tensions in China in its current incarnation as a 'hybrid statist and liberal regime' (p. 220).

China's hybridity emerges as a central theme in a thoughtful set of conclusions from the editors that neatly draw the volume to a close. Fairbrother reprises his earlier argument regarding paternalism emphasising how citizenship education is continuous with this tradition. His central proposition is that the state presents itself as a moral entity, exemplary in its concern with the well-being of the people and consistently engaged in good governance in ensuring their material and spiritual well-being. For Fairbrother there is limited political space to challenge these overriding objectives that are embedded within the education system. In certain respects, this leads to a questioning of the capacity of the state to tolerate a public sphere on which more democratic forms of citizenship education depend. For Zhao its formation is essential to mediate the growing tensions between state paternalism and societal pluralisation. The question remains as to what form a legitimate public sphere can take. What will not be acceptable are the extensive public displays of cynicism and mistrust in political systems that we associate with contemporary liberal democracies. Many of the reforms to citizenship education discussed in the book focus less on the development of political literacy that enable participation in collective action than on the individual, their behaviour and skills, and preparation for the market economy. In a Marshallian sense this is preparation for civic citizenship alongside political and social subjecthood. Kennedy is right to conclude that liberalisation will proceed at a pace that does not threaten the hegemony of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The likely direction of citizenship education in China is therefore best represented by those contributions from Mainland scholars who intertwine liberal and CPC ideology. As he says, 'they know their country, they know their field, they know the possibilities' (p.233). In drawing together those working within and without the system, the volume provides a unique insight into the tensions, constraints and possibilities of citizenship education in China.

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