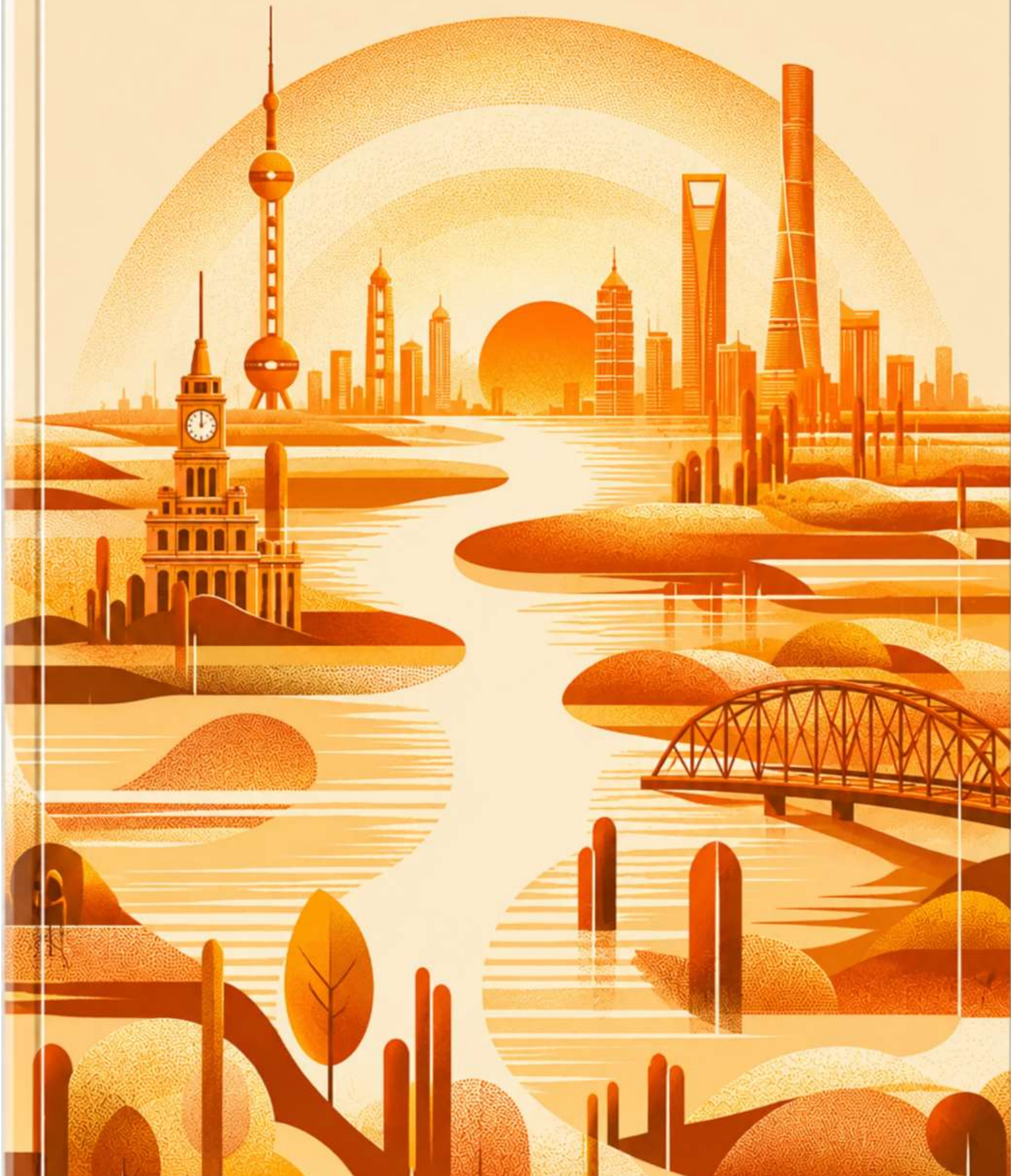


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Connecting China with the World: Sixty Years of Continuous Exploration at the Forefront of Educational Modernization

Institute of International and Comparative Education,
East China Normal University

In 1817, Marc-Antoine Jullien transformed sporadic historical educational activities, such as international travel or study tours, into a science of education grounded in research and aimed at educational borrowing, known as comparative pedagogy. For late-developing countries, this field, with its mission of educational borrowing, serves as a crucial discipline for promoting the modernization of their educational systems. This is particularly relevant for China. In recent years, the study of comparative education in China has aligned with the nation's pursuit of modernization, fostering transformation and development in Chinese education. This has consistently sought to align Chinese education with the international trends in educational modernization, propelling it to “face modernization, face world, and face future.”

In today's uncertain era of advanced technology and overlapping complexities, education modernization is not a fixed concept but an ongoing process. For 60 years, the Institute of International and Comparative Education at East China Normal University, established in 1964, has been dedicated to the continuous pursuit of the frontiers of educational modernization.

Seeking the Frontiers of Educational Modernization through the Study of Education in Developed Countries

With the reform and opening-up strategy adopted by China since the 1980s, comparative education research in China has experienced a period of prosperity. In 1983, Deng Xiaoping introduced the idea that “Orient education towards modernization, globalization and future construction,” providing a general direction for the development of education in China. Education was established as the cornerstone for national development, becoming the strategic focus for the country’s educational advancement. Achieving educational modernization has thus become a key issue for China’s educational development. This necessitates comparative education research to offer international experiences, reflections, and lessons. The work *Comparative Education* given by Wang Chengxu, Zhu Bo, and Gu Mingyuan in 1983 asserted that the purpose of comparative education is to “identify the common laws and trends of educational development, thereby serving as a reference for the education of one’s own country.”

Therefore, to identify common laws and trends in educational modernization, it is essential to prioritize the study of educational advancements in developed countries. Comparative education research at East China Normal University has focused on the educational development in Western Europe and North America. *Development of Modern Teaching Theory* (1988) and *Modern Curriculum Theory* (1989), books of Zhong Qiquan, collected representative teaching and curriculum ideas from the United States, Japan, and the Soviet Union, which introduced the trends and characteristics of contemporary reforms in primary and secondary school curricula and teaching methods in foreign countries.

Du Diankun advanced the research on new developments in education in the former Soviet Union. Gao Wen’s work advanced research in the emerging learning sciences. Zhao Zhongjian developed the study on educational strategies and STEM education. Huang Zhicheng fostered the study of inclusive education and Freire’s educational philosophy. Li Qilong concentrated on the development of German pedagogy and didactics.

Comparative education scholars at East China Normal University, represented by Zhong Qiquan, played a pivotal role in designing and promoting the 2001 basic education curriculum reform, which emphasized developing students’ critical thinking and innovation capability. This reform drew on the latest international educational devel-

opments at the time, embodying a strong cutting-edge global perspective. Based on this, China's basic education reform transitioned smoothly to a curriculum guided by core capacity and future competency, with critical thinking and rationality at its core.

Seeking Fundamental Consensus on Modern Educational Thought from Global Education

Under the impetus of Chinese comparative pedagogy, the educational ideas of Rousseau, Herbart, Dewey, Kellough, Freire, and Benner, which embody the spirit of education in the modern world, were introduced to the Chinese world in turn, and have caused a profound impact on the understanding of the modernity of education in China and the development of modernization. These six educators, with their distinctive ideas, have become well-known and respected in China's educational practice and theory. Their contributions have aligned Chinese educational thinking with the global educational spirit.

They epitomize the spirit of modern education. First, Rousseau believed that education should respect and protect childhood while fostering autonomous individuals to build a political society based on a social contract. Second, Herbart, inheriting the Western tradition of "knowledge as virtue," viewed education as teaching and teaching as the transmission of knowledge. He advocated for a four-step teaching method that could quickly and effectively transmit knowledge, thereby liberating students through learning. Third, Dewey, during his two years in China, promoted the democratic and scientific transformation of Chinese society and education. He asserted that children can engage in genuine thinking only by confronting real problems in the real world. Fourth, Kellough emphasized the political nature of education and proposed an educational philosophy grounded in Marxist ideology. Fifth, Freire identified the social nature of oppression in mainstream education and emphasized promoting social change through dialogue and the awakening of consciousness. Finally, Benner defined human beings as creatures constantly facing life's dilemmas. He asserted that education is one of the six fundamental practices distinguishing humans, alongside politics, economics, morality, aesthetics, and religion. Each practice has its unique concepts and principles and exists in a non-hierarchical relationship with the others.

Seeking Global Consensus Amidst World Crises: Committing to the Permanent Prosperity of Humankind

In the past decade, the process towards human unity and prosperity has encountered significant obstacles, marked by the rise of ultra-nationalists, neo-populists, neo-fascists, and nativists. This trend has precipitated a series of crises across the globe, in which even sectors vital to ecological advancement, such as green industries, have faced unwarranted boycotts driven by irrational sentiment. Amidst these challenges, Chinese comparative pedagogy has witnessed the emergence of three notable paradigm shifts.

Firstly, comparative education concentrates on indigenous educational traditions. The exploration of global educational modernization and the contributions of educational thinkers worldwide have concurrently catalyzed our own indigenous thinking. To advance modernization with Chinese characteristics, particularly in education, Chinese comparative education must not only assimilate external knowledge but also actively formulate pedagogical frameworks rooted in its culture and present its educational achievements and traditions to the global community.

Secondly, we should participate in global governance and provide the world with Chinese experience in education. With China's modernization, especially its economic success, the Chinese Government has put forward the "Belt and Road" initiative to promote modernization in developing countries. Educational assistance and the development of education in the countries along the "Belt and Road" have also become the focus of China's comparative education research.

Thirdly, it is imperative to emphasize globalism and cosmopolitanism in education. China's three recently proposed global initiatives—the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative—along with the concept of "A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," are elevating education from a national focus on personal development, family harmony, and good governance to a broader mission of ensuring global peace. This approach parallels the promotion of socialist core values, advocating for the expansion of educational objectives from individual, social, and national levels to the global "Tianxia" level. Consequently, this necessitates integrating global dimensions of civic education into national civic education frameworks.

In response to the increasingly confrontational, divisive, and polarized crises of today's world, comparative education fosters international understanding and transforms the aspiration for perpetual peace into a sustained, rational dialogue. This dialogue critically examines global issues, seeks international consensus, and exemplifies the civic courage necessary to re-establish and promote the enduring prosperity of the global human community.

1

“TianXia Curriculum” as a New Pathway for Global Citizenship Education

Zhengmei Peng & Ziyue Ma*

Tianxia (天下) is a traditional Chinese concept that translates to “All under Heaven” (Zhao, 2009). This term encompasses the essence of civilization, worldview and cosmopolitanism deeply rooted in Chinese history and culture. Essentially, Tianxiaism epitomizes the traditional Chinese concept of world order. Notably, Chinese scholar Zhao Tingyang was the first to articulate the theory of the “Tianxia System”, drawing upon the traditional Chinese philosophy of “Worldism/Tianxiaism”. His work has garnered significant attention from the international academic community.

Zhao (2011, p.27-28) defines “Tianxia” as a multifaceted concept rich in meaning, encompassing geography, psychology, and social systems. First, from a geographic perspective, it refers to “all the land under the sky”, synonymous with the earth within the Chinese cosmological framework of “heaven, earth, and man”, representing the entirety of the habitable world. Second, it pertains to the collective mindset of all people residing on this land, symbolizing “the heart of civilization”. Third, it carries ethical and political connotations, envisioning an ideal or utopian world order akin to “all people belong to one family”.

The concept of Tianxia integrates these dimensions into a holistic worldview, wherein the world is perceived as a unity comprising the physical realm (the earth), the

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psychological realm (the collective consciousness of people), and the political realm (global institutions) (Zhao, 2011, p. 84).

Subsequently, with the advent of the hegemony of modern Western discourse, traditional Chinese cosmopolitanism began to wane. Scholars such as Xu Jilin emphasized the necessity of building upon the foundation of cosmopolitanism by reinterpreting the wisdom of axial civilizations within the context of modernity, thereby establishing a new universality—termed “new cosmopolitanism”.

In contrast to traditional cosmopolitanism, new cosmopolitanism exhibits two primary characteristics: first, it emphasizes decentralization and de-hierarchization; second, it seeks to create a novel universality for the whole world (Xu, 2014, p. 7). Also, it represents a dual transcendence of both traditional cosmopolitanism and the nation-state. On the one hand, it transcends the centralist perspective of traditional cosmopolitanism while preserving its universalist attributes; it incorporates the principle of sovereign equality inherent in the nation-state but goes beyond its narrow focus on national interests by balancing particularism with universalism (Xu, 2014, p. 8). However, new cosmopolitanism does not regard the East and West as a divide, nor does it consider the past and present as barriers. Instead, it aspires to a universal civilization encompassing all of humanity. While cosmopolitanism may appear to oppose nationalism, it fundamentally embodies the broadest nationalist perspective, seeking to draw on the civilizational achievements of humanity in the construction of a modern nation-state (Xu, 2012).

In the field of education, cosmopolitanism invites a reconsideration of the evolution of global higher education (Yang et al., 2022). They argue that cosmopolitanism offers a heuristic framework for understanding the international dynamics of higher education and knowledge (Yang & Tian, 2022; Yang et al., 2022). Additionally, others suggest that new cosmopolitanism offers a novel perspective on addressing challenges in China-United States educational exchanges and cooperation (Teng et al., 2022). By prioritizing the world as the primary unit of analysis for political and economic interests, it becomes easier to comprehend and address current global issues, thereby fostering a genuine cosmopolitanism that benefits humanity as a whole (Zhao, 2011, p. 84).

In China, the Government attaches great importance to the education of socialist core values, proposing “Prosperity, Democracy, Civility, Harmony, Freedom, Equality,

Justice, Rule of Law, Patriotism, Dedication, Integrity, and Friendship”, which are the basic tenets of China’s socialist core values¹.

These initiatives also represent the Chinese government’s official articulation and practical implementation of global citizenship education. With successive proposals such as “A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” along with the “Global Development Initiative,” “Global Security Initiative,” and “Global Civilization Initiative,” China’s socialist core values have gained increasing prominence. These core values, initially conceptualized at the individual level (Patriotism, Dedication, Integrity, and Friendship), the social level (Freedom, Equality, Justice, and Rule of Law), and the national level (Prosperity, Democracy, Civility, and Harmony), have now been extended to a fourth dimension—the Tianxia level. This expansion aligns with the ancient Chinese principle of “practicing self-cultivation, maintaining family harmony, conducting good governance, and guaranteeing peace.”

The global dimension of socialist core values is still evolving. In line with the ancient Chinese tradition of educational wisdom, these values must be genuinely integrated into a specific curriculum. By “genuinely integrated,” this means the curriculum should be grounded in seminal classics that have had a profound and tangible impact on Chinese historical development. For instance, the works of Mencius and Zhuangzi embody the complementary foundations of Confucianism and Taoism in our culture. Additionally, Yan Fu’s 1903 translation and publication of John Stuart Mill’s “On Liberty”, originally titled “On the Boundaries of Rights and Powers in Chinese”, catalyzed the liberation of individuality, the New Culture Movement, and the modern transformation of Chinese society. Furthermore, the introduction of the Communist Manifesto to the Chinese-speaking world significantly propelled the modern-era awakening in Chinese society, leading to the establishment and development of socialist China.

Research on these four historical classics shows that they focus on different dimensions of practice (Peng et al., 2023). *Mencius* emphasizes the cultivation of the individual, guiding this personal development from the self to the family (fostering family relationships), the socio-political sphere (promoting benevolence among people), and ultimately to all things under heaven (advocating love for the world). *On Liberty* addresses the social realm of individual activity, advocating for a tolerant and pluralistic social space that facilitates individual freedom. *The Communist Manifesto* concentrates on the political sphere of individual activity, calling for the establishment

1. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/18/n/2012/1109/c350821-19529916.html>

of political justice that ensures the free and comprehensive development of each individual. *Zhuangzi* extends to the entire world or nature, urging the elimination of outdated rational conceit and promoting an aesthetic concern for the world, recognizing that “the Tao is one”.

Together, the individual, social, political, and global spheres constitute the comprehensive domains that all human beings must engage. These dimensions also form the holistic framework for China’s education for global citizenship, with each sphere being unique and indispensable.

These four historical classics also present a philosophical-anthropological account of the formation of the human person (global citizenship) and of the conditions for the field of practice.

1. Practically, *Mencius* emphasizes the cultivation of the body as the foundation of Confucian life, highlighting the importance of learning and cultural tradition as fundamental features. This advocates an active, productive life that is culturally and group-oriented. Meaning, life, according to *Mencius*, extends beyond personal cultivation (ego) to encompass the community and all things. To us, this philosophy still dominates the idea of Chinese life.
2. *On Liberty* focuses on the free development of individual life, considering the social conditions necessary for this development through a societal perspective. It posits that a free and richly diverse social environment is essential for true individuality. Thus, the extent of individuality and freedom serves as a measure of social progress.
3. *The Communist Manifesto* underscores the importance of individual freedom and personality growth, arguing that economic equity is a prerequisite for individual liberation. It stresses the need for people-centered political justice, warning that widening social disparities can lead to unrest and revolution, threatening the freedom of all, including the wealthy and middle class.
4. *Zhuangzi* presents a Taoist idea, advocating a philosophy of life or ecology in which “Heaven, Earth, and I were produced together, and all things and I are one”. This view promotes a “poetic habitat” for our lives that addresses the existential sorrow brought about by modernity.

These four anthropological visions encompass the moral, social, political, and universal dimensions of life and thus are indispensable to the fullness of life. Indeed, since ancient times, China has upheld an educational tradition centered around “Tianxia Curriculum.” According to Confucian educational principles, education

involves the transmission of core values essential for societal integration, such as the four cardinal principles (propriety, rightness, integrity, and shame) and the eight virtues (loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, love, honesty, justice, harmony, and peace). Traditional pedagogy actively constructed “Tianxia Curriculum” to implement these core values, initially through the Five Classics and later the Four Books.

Unfortunately, after the abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905, this tradition of the Chinese “Tianxia Curriculum” has largely disappeared (Fan, 1998). Therefore, it is of great significance to reconsider global citizenship education through the lens of Chinese educational wisdom by drawing on the ancient concept of the “Tianxia Curriculum”.

Our claim is that the essence of this idea lies in the four classics, which have integrated China’s core socialist values into their curricula. They encompass the comprehensive framework of the “five-in-one” model, economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological civilization, as well as the concept of a community of shared future for mankind. This integration highlights the core socialist values within the context of socialism.

Simultaneously, the differences in global citizenship education are more clearly expressed through a new global perspective that transcends national boundaries and an ecological concern that goes beyond anthropocentrism. This approach aspires to the higher aesthetic realm of the world’s beauty and unity in diversity, as described by *Zhuangzi*.

These four historical classics embody both a fundamental Chinese vision and the mainstream of modern Western thought. *Mencius* and *Zhuangzi* represent the indigenous traditions of complementary Confucianism and Taoism in the Chinese context, while *On Liberty* and *The Communist Manifesto* constitute the Western traditions of liberalism and critique. Together, these classics merge the traditions of benevolence, freedom, criticism, and ecological aesthetics, which are the dominant discourses in both China and the West, creating a dialogue and tension between the two.

As a result, these four historical classics possess intellectual typicality, contemporary relevance, systematic vision, and inherent complementarity and tension, which are essential to the Chinese “Tianxia” curriculum tradition. They are also cosmopolitan and forward-looking, making them well-suited to what can be termed the “Tianxia Curriculum” of the “New Tianxiaism”. This new curriculum fosters global citizenship education with a global perspective and offers a new path for China’s approach to it.

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Achieving Tianxia Through Action: Perspective from Mencius

Shiqi Zhang & Xiao Mao*

Mencius (372 BCE - 289 BCE) was a representative figure of the Confucian school during the Warring States period. He inherited and developed Confucius's thoughts, most importantly the concept of "*Ren*(benevolence)". His thoughts are primarily recorded in the book "Mencius". In line with Confucius's thought, Mencius advocated that "world (*Tianxia*) peace" must be achieved through proactive action. He also emphasized that "All things are there complete in me", asserting that the care for *Tianxia* lies within one's heart. Mencius believed that by cultivating personal character internally and taking action externally, "world peace" could be achieved.

Mencius' notion of *Tianxia*: "One who is not fond of killing can unite it (*Tianxia*)"

In "Perpetual Peace, A Philosophical Sketch (1785)," Immanuel Kant proposed the ideal of perpetual world peace for humanity. Today, peace remains the most fundamental theme in the contemporary world. Harmony among individuals and between humans and the environment has been a crucial topic of discussion throughout history. Peace and order have also become key to the prosperity and stability of human life. In the face of frequent wars of conquest and annexation among the feudal lords, which resulted in significant loss of life, Mencius raised the questions of who is qualified to rule *Tianxia* and who can restore peace to it. Opposing those who rule the world through military force and warfare, Mencius claimed that only "one who is not fond of killing can unite it (*Tianxia*)." His theory of moral motivation denies the legitimacy

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of achieving *Tianxia* by immoral approaches: “...but had it been necessary to perpetrate one wrongful deed or to kill one innocent man in order to gain the empire (*Tianxia*), none of them would have consented to it.” Only such people could achieve a peaceful World.

The approach to achieving *Tianxia* through military warfare deviates from Mencius’s humanitarian spirit of “benevolence in loving others” (仁者爱人). In the context of national politics, “loving others” manifests as valuing the people (Pan, 2018). Mencius believed that the unification of *Tianxia* should be achieved through peaceful means. In this way, rulers of all nations would implement benevolent governance, and the stability of *Tianxia* would be a natural outcome.

A benevolent governance must place the lives and well-being of the people at the forefront of politics. Mencius claimed that “The people are of supreme importance; the altars to the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes the ruler.” Rulers can only ensure social stability and promote the continuity of their sovereignty by regarding the people as the foundation of governance.

Mencius’ idea of ecology: “benevolent to the people and cherish everything on earth”

Mencius proposed: “Man of virtue is attached to his parents (亲亲) and then is benevolent to the people (仁民), he is benevolent to the people and then cherishes everything on earth (爱物).” These three forms of love follow a path from ego to others and then to all beings, offering the humanity oriental wisdom on ecology. This requires that the benevolent heart and principle of ruling be extended to all natural beings and embraced with philanthropy. Mencius believed that although natural beings lack human virtues, they possess their own inherent value. Therefore, natural beings should be incorporated in the realm of benevolence and deserve respect and care. Mencius emphasized that the productive activity of humans must follow the natural order of beings: “If you do not interfere with the busy seasons in the fields, then there will be more grain than the people can eat...if hatchets and axes are permitted in the forests only in the proper seasons, then there will be more timber than they can use.” The benevolent should be unified with all natural beings, merging benevolence towards people with love for nature, thus promoting harmonious advancement between humans and nature.

Mencius' theory of human nature: "all things are there complete in me"

Mencius' ideas of *Tianxia* and ecology are based on his theory of human nature. Mencius believed that the reason why human nature is inherently good is that humans possess innate potentials toward good. These potentials are "the heart of compassion", "the heart of shame", "the heart of courtesy," and "the heart of right and wrong". Mencius also dubbed them "four germs" because they are respectively the germs of benevolence, dutifulness, modesty, and wisdom. According to Mencius, the heart of compassion takes precedence over other virtues as the fundamental aspect of human nature.

By affirming the four hearts, Mencius established "me" as the basic status of moral self: "all things are there complete in me." Zhu Xi (1130–1200) interpreted this saying as follows: "major events such as those between monarch and his subjects or father and his son, as well as minor affairs in life, all naturally adherent to principles inherent in human nature." Thus, Mencius emphasized that man should engage in self-reflection, thereby revealing and restoring a heart of benevolence towards humanity and, further, towards all beings in the cosmos. More importantly, man must "act with a rigorous effort at the law of reciprocity", which means treating others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and that is the most joyful thing in accordance with human nature.

Conclusion

The tradition of self-cultivation in "Mencius" embeds itself in a logical path, starting from oneself to family (attaching to parents), to social politics (benevolence to the people), to all beings in *Tianxia* (cherish everything on earth). It is reflected in "Da Xue (Great Learning)" as an educational philosophy that proposes a step-by-step learning praxis: from the bottom up, man should first cultivate himself; after that, he should regulate his family; only then can he govern a state; and finally, he is able to achieve *Tianxia*. This Confucian educational tradition requires individuals to diligently study, combining inner awareness with self-cultivation, thereby transforming the innate potential for good into reality (Sun & Shan, 2019), and improving this crisis-ridden world through action.

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Non-action Makes All under Heaven Flourish: The Vision of Zhuangzi

Yuezhu Wu*

The “global” is the common context for all the actions and reflections of human civilisation at present, and global governance is the common ground for countries to demonstrate their international power of discourse and leadership. Discussions on this subject may not have led to unity, but rather to the confrontation of camps and values, which is why UNESCO has proposed an ecology-based approach to global governance, and various countries and organisations committed to peace and sustainable development have made efforts to do the same. However, the current global tensions have not yet led to a fundamental change.

In traditional Chinese society, the term “All under Heaven” (*Tianxia*) was the common Chinese cultural vision of a shared space for human beings, and this concept was the object of common endeavours by all schools of thought during the pre-Qin period for its improvement. Unlike any other school of thought, Taoism’s construction of an ideal order did not focus first on social ethics or the state system, but rather on the broadest concept of space, *Tianxia*, as a starting point. *Zhuangzi*, as one of the representatives of Taoism, expanded on *Laozi*’s ideas, making them more vivid and enriching them, and his view of *Tianxia* is also in the same lineage as *Laozi*’s. *Zhuangzi* devotes a chapter of his writings to “*Tianxia*” and makes this concept the unifying backdrop for all his arguments. On the basis of the view of *Tianxia*, *Zhuangzi*’s non-action frees itself from positional disputes and sees the limitations of various schools of thought from the heights of “The way” (*Dao*) and the posture of

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“Wandering Far and Unfettered” (*Xiaoyaoyou*). *Zhuangzi*’s thought complements today’s global trend of over-obsession with rationality and preoccupation with the establishment of a unified world order, and brings a transcendental perspective to today’s intractable international problems.

“The art of *Dao* will be split up by today’s *Tianxia*”: *Zhuangzi*’s critique of various schools of thought and the uniqueness of his view of *Tianxia*

In the chapter “The World”, which focuses on *Zhuangzi*’s thoughts on the *Tianxia*, *Zhuangzi* summarises the current state of thought by saying that “The art of *Dao* will be split up by today’s *Tianxia*” (Guo, 2012. pp.1078). Those schools of thought that attempted to make a statement and offer advice all severed the wholeness of *Dao*, instead complicating the situation and making people’s hearts flutter. The various schools of thought have their own gains and losses in *Zhuangzi*’s critique.

- *Mo Di* and *Qin Guli*: The “frugality” of the Moists, who advocated simplification and avoidance of artificial ornaments, was essentially praised by the Taoists, but too much moderation came at the cost of violating the naturalness of human nature: “Against the will of *Tianxia*, *Tianxia* can hardly tolerate it”.

- *Song Xing* and *Yin Wen*: The Jixia Huanglao school they represented inherited the *Mozi*’s idea of frugality and self-suffering, and based on it, prohibited the use of military force for attack and invasion as the policy of outward domination, but in *Zhuangzi*’s view, it was still superficial and far from the essence of the *Dao*.

- *Peng Meng*, *Tian Pian* and *Shen Dao*: The Jixia School of Taoism, which they represented, also presented a attitude of “public but not partisan, open but not selfish”, and treated the world without prejudice and harsh demands, following nature, which was closer to the “*Dao*” than the previous two schools, but they over-emphasised the absoluteness of the “*Dao*” and fell into paranoia: “even the dirt contains the *Dao*” (Guo, 2012, pp.2094).

- *Hui Shi*: Huishi has a wide range of knowledge, but *Zhuang Zi* thinks that *Huizi*’s interpretation of the world is too detailed, too many words and inappropriate, ignoring the “heaven and earth as one”, resulting in “a lifetime of being plunged into infinity” (Guo, 2012, p. 1115), and *Huizi* could be regarded as the extreme of the situation that *Zhuangzi* criticised, whose excessive manipulation of things was the most disliked by *Zhuangzi*.

Based on the above criticisms, the concept of *Tianxia* in *Zhuangzi*'s thought is a unique context that distinguishes it from Confucianism and other schools of thought. Firstly, *Zhuangzi* advanced the concept of “*Tianxia*” at an ontological level. *Tianxia* has no self-evident social dimension that can be found in the Confucian vision, and is not a product of human beings, but an objective transcendental existence: “*Tianxia* is the unity of all things” (Guo, 2012, p. 716). Secondly, although Confucianism recognises *Tianxia* as the spatial boundary of all lands, it does not attach importance to the natural part of it which has not been set foot by human civilisation, whereas *Zhuangzi*'s *Tianxia* is the sum of the whole humanistic world and the natural world, and even endows the purely natural part of it with a unique emotional orientation and value superiority (Li, 2015). Thirdly, Confucianism advocates “pacifying the world”, meaning that the survival of the world itself and its order depends on active social activities by human beings, whereas *Zhuangzi*'s “world” is a natural, spontaneous, and self-initiated field. *Zhuangzi* tells the story of *Shu* and *Hu*, who came to the land of *Chaos* and were treated very well by *Chaos*. Above all, they sought to repay *Chaos* for its virtues, saying: “All men have seven orifices to see, hear, eat, and breathe, but this one has none, so we will try to chisel it out. “The allegory ends with the death of *Chaos* under the carving (Guo, 2012, p. 317). The term “*Chaos*” is equivalent in scope to “*Tianxia*” and suggests *Zhuangzi*'s ideal world order: *Zhuangzi* advocated that the order of objective nature, no matter how primitive and coarse it may seem to human society, should not be made with any artificial attachments or regulations (Chen, 2002).

Unity of Plurality as One: The Diversity of the World is Fulfilled Through *Non-action*

Thus, it is in his unique vision of *Tianxia* that *Zhuangzi* develops one of the central concepts of his thought, “non-action”, and in the context of the *Tianxia*, *Zhuangzi*'s admonition of “*non-action*” to rulers is essentially a dissolution of the anthropocentrism and ethical centre: Any construction of the original appearance of *Tianxia* is inferior, and any social regulation in the name of power and collective interest is hypocrisy. *Zhuangzi* criticises all actions of individuals and organisations that dominate the power structure, regardless of whether they are self-interested or un-egoistic

because any so-called unself-interested behaviour stems from an egocentric judgement of the needs of others, and is inherently selfish. *Zhuangzi's* statement that the ideal ruler should “do nothing but always be natural” is in fact the highest expectation of a ruler: a ruler who truly does nothing and follows nature will completely reject all individual limitations and stand on the same level as the *Dao*, and his/her spirit will be highly integrated with the laws of nature - this is the ultimate goal of *Zhuangzi's* “Equalizing Assessments of Things” (*Qiwu*) i.e., the unity of subject and object under the *Dao* (Chen, 2002). In “Make all things equal”, *Zhuangzi* says: “All things are like this, all things are like that” (Guo, 2012, p. 72). As a matter of fact, *Zhuangzi's* elimination of the separation of all things avoids the possibility of any notion to make an artificial and compulsory division of things, and preserves the self-existing plurality of all things to the greatest extent possible - just as *Lao Zi* said, “The *Dao* begets one, the one begets two, the two begets three, and the three begets everything” - the way of nature above all things naturally hides infinite possibilities for diversification.

2. Individual Prosperity in a World of *Non-action*: Implications of *Zhuangzi's* View of *Tianxia* for Future Education

Zhuangzi's view of the *Tianxia* offers a futuristic Chinese wisdom for today's process of globalisation and the development of cosmopolitan thought: while many countries hope to impose a universal world order on all humankind, *Zhuangzi's* view of *Tianxia* is a constraint and a reminder to all rulers, and to the ideological values that have held a strong position at any time in history, that any civilisation that moves towards strength has the seeds of narrow-mindedness and hegemony embedded in it (Zhu, 2018). At the same time, *Zhuangzi* fully liberates the power of only two poles: *Tianxia* and the individual. *Zhuangzi* puts great trust in the potential of the individual, believing that the endowment of “Virtuosity” (*De*) exists naturally in every individual: “The virtuosity of *Tianxia* is merged equally in every human being”. “Isn't virtuosity human emotion? The saints engaged in indoctrination are really too anxious” (Guo, 2012, p. 326). *De*, as an extension of *Dao*, is both an inherent property of nature and an intrinsic endowment of human nature (Xu, 1997). Its emancipation presupposes true freedom from anarchic interference. Therefore, the true face of *Tianxia* should be found in every soul that is free to develop, and in this sense, *Zhuangzi* said: “Nothing in the world is larger than the tip of a hair in autumn, and Mt. Tai is small. No one lives longer than a dead child, and old

Pengzu died an early death. Heaven and earth are born together with me, and the ten thousand things and I are one". This is not an echo of a primitive culture, but a futuristic declaration of individualism and cosmopolitanism that puts aside all competitiveness: a individual is the world. Another of its quotes: "Instead of spitting water on each other to keep them moist, we should forget each other in the lakes and rivers" (Guo, 2012, p. 249) also liberates individuals from all potential collectivist constraints in the context of *Tianxia* and maximises the individuality of them.

Therefore, *Zhuangzi's non-action* points to such a purpose: standing at the height of *Tianxia* that transcends time, space, nationalities, and ideologies, and in the space of equality and peace, the individual is enabled to exist, create, and be blessed with the greatest freedom. Such a wish is also true for education: the future of education will transcend all utilitarianism, and all of its endeavours will ultimately be directed towards the natural development of the individual and dedicated to a social space full of tolerance and opportunity for the creative development of each individual. Such an education will fundamentally create the individual and *Tianxia* in *Zhuangzi's* dream.

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Toward Ecological Global Citizenship: Educational Implications in China's Ecological Civilization and Its Ecological Turn

Qingtao Wang

At present, the global ecological and environmental crisis, highlighted by the intensification of climate change and the loss of biodiversity, is posing unprecedented and increasingly serious challenges to the development of modern human civilization. In China, “ecological civilization,” as a modern concept, is being hotly debated and is regarded as Chinese wisdom and philosophy for addressing global ecological challenges and building a beautiful home on earth (Goron, 2018; Zhao et al., 2023). Unlike the new forms of civilization in industrial and agricultural civilizations, China's new concept of ecological civilization can be understood as a political perspective with environmental management, ecological restoration, and green development as its main principles (Xue et al., 2023).

In the context of Chinese government policy, the concept of “ecological civilization” was first introduced in 2007. This is the earliest time that the building of an ecological civilization has been identified as a policy objective of the Chinese Government, specifically as one of the new requirements for achieving the goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects.

Promote a conservation culture by basically forming an energy- and resource-efficient and environment-friendly structure of industries, pattern of growth and mode of consumption. We will have a large-scale circular economy and considerably increase the proportion of renewable energy sources in total energy consumption. The discharge of major pollutants will be brought under effective control and the ecologi-

*cal and environmental quality will improve notably. Awareness of conservation will be firmly established in the whole of society*¹.

Subsequently, ecological civilization has been widely mentioned and emphasized in the political reports of successive Chinese governments (issued every five years). In 2012, the eighteenth political report of China elevated the construction of ecological civilization to a particularly prominent position, combining it with economic, political, cultural and social construction to form a “five-in-one” overall layout. The political status of ecological civilization was elevated to “a long-term task for the well-being of the people and the future of China”², while ecological civilization was written into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China and included as a goal in the new five-year plan. In 2017, the 19th Congress developed the interpretation of ecological civilization, and clarified the green development concept of “green water, green mountains”. Through the new Party Constitution, it is even more clearly stipulated that “accelerate the reform of the ecological civilization system and build a beautiful China”³. In 2018, the term was formally written into the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. In 2022, it was further proposed in the report of the 20th government that “Chinese-style modernization is modernization in which human beings and nature coexist in harmony”⁴, pointing to the future strategic tasks of China’s ecological civilization construction in the new era, and the general tone of which is to push forward green development and promote human beings’ harmonious coexistence with nature. The overall tone is to promote green development and harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature.

In China, taking ecological civilization as a guiding principle and continuously raising the status of the idea of ecological civilization in China’s socio-economic strategy and governance is not only a political manifestation of the Chinese Government’s efforts to lead the whole society (including the people of all ethnic groups) to build a beautiful China through the concept of ecological civilization, but also China’s solemn commitment to actively building a community of human destiny through the construction of ecological civilization in order to cope with global ecological and environmental problems. In September 2020, Chinese leader Xi Jinping announced at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly that China is striving to peak its carbon

1. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229611.htm>

2. http://www.china.org.cn/china/18th_cpc_congress/2012-11/16/content_27137540.htm

2. http://www.china.org.cn/china/18th_cpc_congress/2012-11/16/content_27137540.htm

4. http://english.scio.gov.cn/20thcpccongress/2022-10/26/content_78486016.html

dioxide emissions by 2030 and working towards a carbon-neutral target by 2060. In October 2021, the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Kunming, China, with the theme of “Ecological Civilization: Building a Community of Life for the Planet”, which was the first global conference organized by the United Nations on the theme of “Ecological Civilization”. This is the first global conference organized by the United Nations on the theme of “ecological civilization”.

It can be said that with the in-depth promotion of the construction of ecological civilization, all sectors of Chinese society are actively implementing and practicing the concept of ecological civilization, from new energy vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic modules in the energy, industry and transportation sectors to green bicycle sharing, garbage sorting, and elimination of wasted food in our daily lives, which all highlight the fact that the concept of ecological civilization has been incorporated into China’s overall planning for economic and social development, and has become an important code of action for China. The concept of ecological civilization has been integrated into the overall planning of China’s economic and social development, and has become an important code of conduct for China and its members of society to live a green life. Many commentators believe that ecological civilization as a concept is different from previous national sustainable development strategies, and that ecological civilization integrates ecological environmental protection into the national political governance system through governmental administrative reforms, and runs through the process of the Chinese government’s leadership of all ethnic groups of the country in their struggle to realize the dream of a beautiful China (Gu et al, 2020). According to relevant research, the emergence of ecological civilization can be understood as the Chinese government’s response to environmental degradation and its vision for a sustainable global future (Hansen, Li, & Svarverud, 2018). Thus, China is becoming a potential “green power” in the 21st century (Cribb, 2017).

Accordingly, as the Chinese government promotes the concept of “ecological civilization”, “ecological civilization education” programs are becoming popular in China. Although there are some problems in practice, especially confusion with concepts such as environmental education, the growing popularity of the concept of ecological civilization in Chinese schools marks a paradigm shift in Chinese schooling and in education for global citizenship. In China, eco-citizenship education is an important part of China’s global citizenship education, and research and publications on eco-civilization education and eco-citizenship education have increased dramatically in both quantity and quality (Zhou et al., 2023). Focusing on the requirements of this major shift

in thinking, schools, as institutions engaged in scientific research and talent training, should, on the one hand, take the lead in promoting green, recycling and low-carbon development, and contribute to the sustainable development of China and the world. On the other hand, they should also make full use of their own advantages and roles, actively promote ecological civilization education, and explore a path for eco-school construction toward green and low-carbon development.

In March 2021, China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment and other six departments issued the "Beautiful China, I am an Actor" Action Plan for Enhancing Citizens Awareness of Ecological Civilization (2021-2025), which explicitly points out that it is necessary to promote education on ecological civilization in schools, incorporate education on ecological civilization into the national education system, improve the construction of disciplines on ecological environmental protection, and intensify the training of high-level talents in ecological environmental protection⁵. In November 2022, China's Ministry of Education issued the Implementation Plan for the Construction of a National Education System for Green and Low-Carbon Development, which even called for "comprehensively integrating the concept of green and low-carbon development into the national education system at all levels and in all fields, and cultivating a new generation of young people who will practice the concept of green and low-carbon, adapt to a green and low-carbon society, and lead the way for green and low-carbon development".

It can be seen that under the relevant requirements of the Chinese government, ecological civilization education has been placed in a prominent position in global citizenship education, emphasizing the necessity of advancing ecological civilization education in Chinese schools, especially with regard to the paradigm shift in global citizenship education, as well as the possibilities of fostering ecological global citizens. In particular, the construction of an ecological civilization education system covering curriculum, teaching materials, pedagogy, and teachers as soon as possible has just become an important part of China's society-wide efforts to promote the construction of an ecological civilization and a beautiful China⁶.

Indeed, this is also consistent with two important UNESCO reports on the future of education based on eco-justice. One is "Learning to Become with the World: Education for Future Survival", a 2020 declaration on education for 2050. The report calls for an "eco-justice" shift in the educational paradigm, asserting that Western humanism, centered on individualism, should end and be replaced by some kind

5. https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-03/01/content_5589507.htm

6. http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A03/moe_1892/moe_630/202211/t202211/t20221108_979321.html

of more communal collectivism to address the urgent global ecological crises facing humankind (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020). The other, “Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education”, released at the end of 2021, elevates eco-justice to a common global goal for education, alongside social and economic justice (UNESCO, 2021). Global ecological issues and sustainable development must not be addressed solely at the level of ecological justice, but also need to be complemented and supported by political justice, social justice, and justice for individual development, and urgently require common global change and action.

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Problematizing GCE's Humanism in Countering the Anthropocene: Posthumanism, Post-critical, and Ecopedagogical Questions and Possibilities

Greg William Misiaszek, Ph.D.

How do we teach the beyond-humans essence of environmental pedagogies in critical models of global citizenship education (GCE) and Freirean, critical theories-grounded ecopedagogy rooted in humanization? Coinciding with other ecopedagogical scholars (see Dickmann, 2023; Gadotti, 2008, 2009; Gutiérrez & Prado, 1989), I have argued that inherent, inseparable connections exist between humans' acts of environmental violence and social violence. I have also argued for the inseparable connection between GCE and ecopedagogy, for either to be successful (Misiaszek, 2015; including within GCR - Misiaszek, 2017)¹. This article's overall question is how overfocusing on humanization can entrench anthropocentrism (focusing only on the human world and ignoring the rest of Nature), ² thereby falsely justifying anti-environmental, unsustainable actions. The argument is the essentialness of unpacking the anthropocentric nuances of humanization that are often not questioned. To such ends, the goal

1. "Ecopedagogy's essential role in teaching global citizenship and sustainable development" in *Global Commons Review* issue 0.

2. "Nature" and "Earth" are uppercased throughout this article to avoid ecolinguistically objectifying either. The article "the" will not be used before the word "Earth." The term "the rest of" before "Nature" indicates all that is non-human (or outside the "world," which includes all humans and human populations) to counter notions that we, as humans, are not part of Nature.

is to strengthen the inherent connections between GCE and planetary sustainability, as well as to further disrupt perverted, mislabeled GCE models that are dehumanizing and unsustainable.

Problematizing Humanism in GCE

First, I must emphasize that humanization is essential in all forms of GCE and ecopedagogy. However, the nuances of this essentialness raise four questions below that are crucial to unpacking how humanization is taught and theoretically grounded in GCE.

How does humanization prioritization delegitimize the rest of Nature?

2 - How can this widen the ideological separation between us, as humans, from the rest of Nature (i.e., *world-Earth distancing* (see Misiaszek, 2018)) rather than being *part* of Nature?

3 - How does narrowing GCE within only Northern epistemologies lead to over-prioritizing the anthroposphere?

4 - How can all these aspects affect citizenship education, including GCE, decrease caring for the rest of Nature?

The following sections discuss just some of the nuances of the humanization foundations of GCE and critical environmental pedagogies that are frequently overlooked by viewing the foundations as an unquestionable good in all its forms. I use the term “nuance(s)” to signify that humanization is essential for GCE and ecopedagogy; however, it is the subtle, but sometimes systematically hidden, misteaching of humanization that can justify anti-environmental actions against the rest of Nature and, perversely, dehumanizing actions against one another. The questions above are not answered in this article, but serve to problematize our GCE and ecopedagogical work.

Nuances Beyond Disrupting Neoliberal GC: Perversion of (Critical) GCE

Problematizing humanization in GCE begins with actively disrupting GCE models and aspects that are dehumanizing – inherently deprioritizing justice, peace, and sustainability. In other words, posthumanism through ecopedagogical lenses includes humanism and planetary sustainability – “sustainability includes environmentalism outside humans’ interests, recognizing that planetary unsustainability is due to our anti-environmental activities” (Misiaszek, 2023b, p. 3).

Various categorizations of GCE form contested terrains. For example, Lynette Shultz (2007) categorizes global citizenship as either neoliberal, radical, or transformationalist³. In this article, I problematize the intersectionalities among these three GCE models, beyond the more apparent groupings of the latter falling under a “critical GCE” umbrella and the first, neoliberal GC, as directly countered by this criticality umbrella. Neoliberal models and influence on GCE are dehumanizing and deplanetrizing. Neoliberal (GC) education “serves a human capital function (Andreotti, 2014) that is tied to the wider knowledge society where expertise is exchanged as a means to further (individual and national) economic development (Stein, 2015)” (Pashby, da Costa, Stein, & Andreotti, 2020, p. 150). This coincides with the neoliberal tenet that profiteering in one’s private sphere trumps all else, and that the well-being of public spheres is ignored unless it affects one’s private sphere (Postma, 2006).

Citizenships, plural to indicate local-to-global-to-planetary citizenship spheres, are viewed as valueless unless it is the latter case, and the rest of Nature is deprioritized to nil unless the non-anthropocentric ill affects the self’s private sphere (Misiaszek, 2015). Such GCE models must not be ignored; instead, GCE *with* ecopedagogy must actively disrupt neoliberal models and other dehumanizing forms of GCE through (anti-) environmentalism (Misiaszek, 2018). A key argument of ecopedagogy’s inseparability from GCE aligns with its goals of actively disrupting dehumanization, including neoliberalism, and being non-anthropocentric. Meaningfully adapting GCE and ecopedagogy to local cultures through bottom-up approaches is both humanizing and essential to the success of sustainability, but neoliberal globalization dismisses it as worthless. This is further discussed in the last epistemologies (i.e., knowledges and ways of knowing) section.

Karen Pashby, Marta da Casta, Sharon Stein, and Vanessa Andreotti’s (2020) meta-review of GCE interrogated the following intersectional orientations among models: neoliberal-liberal and liberal-critical interfaces of neoconservative-neoliberal-liberal, critical-liberal-neoliberal, and critical-post-critical models. Without going into the details of the intersectionalities in this short article, they found that neoliberalism is frequently tied to liberal (citing Schattle, 2008) and critical GCE. The other key aspect that aligns with this article’s topic is its shared Northern/Western/Eurocentric epistemological grounds, which will be discussed further in the last section.

3. I use Shultz’s categorizations for my arguments; however, it should be noted that Shultz’s work aligns with my overall arguments given in this article (see Abdi, A. A., Shultz, L., & Pillay, T. (Eds.). (2015). *Decolonizing global citizenship education*. Sense Publishers).

Nuances of Ecopedagogy

Injustices within the anthroposphere, between humans and human populations, highlight the necessity of ecopedagogical teaching and reading (i.e., ecopedagogical literacy) to unpack the politics of environmental issues and critically determine who pays, who suffers, and who benefits from environmentally harmful actions (Misiaszek, 2017). But what about the rest of Nature, outside of human beings? Ecopedagogy and/with GCE should not deprioritize adverse effects upon Nature beyond humans, as the overall ecopedagogical goal is “globally all-inclusive socio-environmental justice and planetary sustainability” (Misiaszek, 2023a). Specifically, separating “planetary sustainability” acknowledges Karen Warren’s (2000) ecofeminist arguments that justice must have reciprocal relationships (e.g., I can do an unjust act upon you, being able to understand it is unjust)⁴; however, Nature outside of human beings cannot be unjust to humans without the self-reflexive ability to determine what are just/unjust differences. For example, a typhoon or an earthquake is not an injustice, nor is a tiger attacking a person out of hunger.

In his most famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Paulo Freire has been critiqued for discussing humans’ uniqueness of having histories that allow for self-reflexivity and to determine our acts from our reflexivity (i.e., praxis). This includes doing “environmental” or “anti-environmental” actions. Wayne Au and Michael Apple (2007), among many others, including myself, have viewed the vast majority as superficial analyses of his work. Freire did not devalue the rest of Nature to be utilized, and worse commodified, for humans’ needs and wants, but rather emphasized our need to be stewards of Nature (Misiaszek, 2023b). This is exemplified by his unfinished book (due to his untimely death), which was to be on ecopedagogy (Gadotti & Torres, 2009; Misiaszek & Torres, 2019), in which many of his working notes were included in the *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Freire, 2004). There are significant environmental critiques of Freire and critical theoretical work overall, including the possibilities and necessities of their reinventions to disrupt humanism over-prioritization that leads to anthropocentrism.

4. The ability and actual recognition are two different things, but either can be defined under (un)justice aspects.

Nuances of (GCE) Criticality: Epistemological Grounding and Softening GCE

Criticality and the use of critical theories in education can help disrupt anthropocentrism, but they can also further entrench it to justify anti-environmentalism. One key argument for the need for post-criticism of GCE, including critical GCE models, is the problematizing, reinventing, and sometimes unlearning of dominant Northern foundations of critical theories⁵. The goal of such post-critical work, including on GCE (e.g., see Kester, 2023), is not to end using Northern-oriented critical theories but rather to deepen and widen reflexivity beyond those orientations, problematizing the orientations and recognizing that the essence of critical theories did not only emerge from the North (see Abdi, 2022). As such, disrupting the “contemporary, dominant Western-centric systems of education basically reproducing societal contexts in their hegemonic and colonial ways, new critiques of the situation are as important as ever” (Misiaszek, Popoff, & Abdi, 2022, p. 3).

Problematizing humanizing GCE includes questioning its groundings, whether they are rooted only in Western, Eurocentric (i.e., epistemologies of the North) that are touted as liberal. As the name suggests and these epistemologies indicate, the sense of individualism is centralized to differing degrees. This includes why we do GCE work and the essence of the neoliberal perversion of GCE, as discussed previously.

Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti (2014) begins her chapter on soft versus critical GCE by giving a vignette given to students of young activists attending a black-tie ball to commend their work “transformative” acts, with the organizers’ posters having the catch-phrase “do what you love doing, but save the world while you do it.” Given her own Southern positionality, she wrote that what disturbs her most is that students did not recognize the vignette as problematic, supporting the idea that the:

primary motivation for ‘training as an activist’ was related to self-improvement, the development of leadership skills or simply having fun, enhanced, of course, by the moral supremacy and vanguardist feeling of being responsible for changing or saving the world ‘out there’ (de Andreotti, 2014, pp. 21-22).

Accompanying this fear, de Andreotti (2014) includes that coinciding GC work will not be critically reflexive through diverse epistemologies, but will further entrench

5. “Unlearning” used here does not imply not learning or forgetting about Northern epistemologies, but rather unlearning them normative, unquestionable ideological and disciplinary foundations.

Northern ideologies, including (extreme) individualism and further sustaining (neo) coloniality. This coincides with Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (2018) arguments that epistemologies of the North are grounded in coloniality, patriarchy, and capitalism.

Echoing Gayatri Spivak's (2004; 1996) arguments, this aligns with Northerners' ingrained ideology that they are the world's center, solving all the world's problems for the Global South rather than *with* the South. A key defining factor of critical GCE for Andreotti (2014), as compared to "soft" GCE that can be read through these arguments, is that dominant knowledges and commonsense must be socio-historically deconstructed for education, not so much reaching "truths" rooted in such ways of knowing, but to:

providing the space for them to reflect on their context and their own and others' epistemological and ontological assumptions: how we came to think/be/feel/act the way we do and the implications of our systems of belief in local/global terms in relation to power, social relationships and the distribution of labour and resources (p. 27).

Soft GCE models do not align with ecopedagogy and should be countered to foster deeper critical models that align with my argument that shallow environmental pedagogies can often be more anti-environmental than leading towards students' environmentalism (Misiaszek, 2020). This argument of the practices of "environmental" pedagogies can, and I argue, need to be continuously problematized, upon GCE work as leading towards or away from goals of peace, sustainability, and satisfying personhood (i.e., the *global commons* (see Torres, 2017).

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6

Building a Human Knowledge Community to Promote Equal Cultural Dialogue Between the East and the West

Gang Zhu*

With the rise of Western nationalism, global community consciousness has become an important strategy to combat Western hegemony and one of the future trends in comparative education research. The traditional knowledge production system is mainly led by developed countries in Europe and America, and numerous educational theories have emerged in universities and research institutions in the northern hemisphere and metropolitan areas. Many countries and regions in the southern hemisphere, including Africa, Oceania, and Latin America, have become passive recipients of Western hegemonic theories (Takayama et al., 2017). In this sense, Europe has become the benchmark for educational modernization and the criterion, reference system, and method for comparative education knowledge production (Zhang et al., 2015). Many comparative education scholars have adopted the “Europe as Method” approach to examining the level of development and the knowledge production system of their own education systems. The theories and experiences proposed by Asian countries have been excluded from the international mainstream knowledge system and have not received the recognition they deserve.

Postcolonial theorists have criticized the inequality in the global knowledge system from the perspective of knowledge sociology, calling for the construction of a human knowledge community and promoting equal cultural dialogue between the East and

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the West (Takayama et al., 2017). As the three important theoretical foundations of critical cultural studies, new orientalism, “Asia as Method”, and the southern theory provide important theoretical resources for building a human knowledge community, and also provide possibilities for comparative education to achieve a postcolonial turn (Takayama, 2016). They criticize the current global academic hierarchy of “the West as Method” from the perspective of knowledge sociology, promoting the “de-westernization” and democratization of international knowledge production.

As the largest developing country in the world, China is actively participating in the global educational governing system. Promoting the diversification and democratization of the global knowledge production system is an important component of the global education governing system. Therefore, building a human knowledge community is not only an important component of implementing China’s advocacy of a community with a shared future for mankind (Yang, 2019) but also has multiple implications for the development of comparative education in China.

Firstly, the human knowledge community can enrich the diverse “reference system” of comparative education and break the knowledge hierarchy order between “center-periphery”, “east-west,” and “south-north” in the context of globalization. Comparative education, dominated by Western hegemonic culture and ideology, makes it difficult for scholars from different countries to explore local educational philosophy and wisdom using their unique epistemologies and methodologies. In the human knowledge community, the cognitive traditions, unique perspectives, and research methods of different ethnic groups will be treated equally, contributing to a shared wisdom for humanity.

Secondly, the human knowledge community is instrumental in telling the story of China’s educational reform and development well. It also fosters the dissemination of China’s experience in educational reform to the world. As part of diverse Asia, China has its own unique characteristics and developmental potential (Hayhoe, 2017a). The experience of international education exchange and assistance in the context of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, the successful experience of Beijing-Shanghai-Jiangsu-Zhejiang education, the construction of double first-class universities, core competency curriculum reform, and other cases all demonstrate China’s unique wisdom and plans in education. The experience of education reform since China’s reform and opening-up policy can enrich the diversity of the world’s cognitive system and thus make an important contribution to the human knowledge community (Hayhoe, 2017b).

Thirdly, the human knowledge community could enrich the theoretical perspectives of comparative education and promote the updating of disciplinary research paradigms. The human knowledge community is not a specific research tool but rather an open and inclusive attitude towards knowledge that aims to challenge cultural chauvinism and Western symbolic hegemony. The human knowledge community can diversify the theoretical perspectives in comparative education and promote equal dialogue on social and educational theories across different social contexts. As comparative education scholar Ruth Hayhoe (2017a) mentioned, the development of comparative education in the 21st century requires recognition and understanding among different civilizations. In the future, research on comparative education will move towards a sustainable, open, green, and multilateral disciplinary ecology.

Fourthly, the human knowledge community could accelerate the establishment of a knowledge production system for comparative education with Chinese characteristics. There has long been a knowledge production model of “transplantation plus reference” in comparative education in China, which uses the major developed countries in Europe and the US as the frame of reference for modernization and as the main objects of learning, imitation, and catching up (Zhu, 2021). An important mission for future comparative education scholars in China is to further enhance their legitimacy, appropriateness, and rigor as original knowledge producers, grounded in in-depth, systematic learning from international experiences. Within the framework of the human knowledge community, it is possible to achieve equal and mutually beneficial sharing of global knowledge.

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Culture as a Form of Knowledge: Reflection on Curriculum in Contemporary Education

Hongyan Chen*

In the contemporary educational landscape, “culture” remains a contentious term. Modern school practices, which prioritize rational-logical values, often perceive culture as an “intruder” that disrupts planned procedures and poses risks of deviation from schooling. Here, culture is frequently underlined as a “haunting specter”, influencing students’ academic achievements, fostering educational inequity, and driving school conflicts and campus violence. In this sense, culture is naturally treated as an implicit, silent adherent that needs to be “addressed” in educational discourse. As a result, culture has rarely been seriously considered as a form of knowledge, and its legitimacy within the formal curriculum has long been inadequately recognized. It is not until the advent of globalization and the rise of post-colonialism that researchers begin to show interest in concepts such as cultural homogenization, cultural diversification, cultural hybridization, cultural imperialism, and cultural inclusiveness, etc., within curricula. Despite this, discussions on how culture can become systematic curricular knowledge remain scarce.

Culture, as a form of curriculum and legitimate knowledge, can be systematized and organized as a learning resource that nourishes students’ growth. Unlike traditional curricula, which structure their subjects and contents based on rational-logical thought, culture as a form of knowledge can expand the content of contemporary school curricula in at least four aspects:

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- *Practical Wisdom*: The essence of cultural knowledge lies in collective practical wisdom. It originates from human collective practices and embodies performance in everyday life rather than theoretical constructs.

- *Relational Network*: Cultural knowledge is structured and represented by relational elements rather than concepts, propositions, or hypotheses. This relational aspect places individuals within certain interconnected social networks.

- *Emotional Bonds*: The result of learning culture is the formation of emotional bonds among learners, not merely cognitive enhancement. Emotion, often neglected in rational-logical-dominated education, is a vital driving force of human development and reflects the effectiveness of cultural performance.

- *Interpretation and Mutual Construction*: The transmission of cultural knowledge relies on interpretation and mutual construction rather than unidirectional explanation, logical proof, and dialectical thinking.

Moreover, Elias (2009) contends that culture embodies the value and character of particular human products rather than intrinsic personal value. In this sense, culture is a form of practical knowledge originating from human interactions and shared practices. These practices rely on tangible objects, such as tools and archaeological artifacts, as well as intangible expressions such as songs and dances (Xu, 2018). Tangible and intangible cultural elements endure the test of time, becoming ritualized records that fulfill their purpose. Through repeated performances and rituals, culture is reactivated, gaining social legitimacy and creating new meanings that endure over time. Practical knowledge, therefore, often manifests as a pre-reflective but powerful guide for behavior, approachable through interaction and discourse.

Unlike traditional subjects, organized around concepts, propositions, and hypotheses, cultural knowledge is always presented through relationships. As practical knowledge, culture is embedded in specific interactions and constructs particular relational models, placing individuals within concrete social networks. These networks offer opportunities to practice different identities within family, community, and societal contexts, and further navigate personal developmental paths. While this process has often been understood negatively, in the era of globalization individuals demonstrate the capacity to actively engage with diverse, multi-layered communities, shaping and reshaping their self-understanding through cultural identity dynamics and dialogue. For instance, discussing eco-pedagogy in the Anthropocene emphasizes the common good, highlighting the significance of global interconnectedness and mutual benefit.

Reconstructing the relationship between humans and nature in this new era requires a foundation based on principles of overall human development and social justice. Only by considering the voices of socially disadvantaged cultural groups, the other, and the historical disparities among countries can ecological advocacies such as community gardens, green technologies, and sustainability action plans gain legitimacy. Thus, the presentation of cultural knowledge is not merely a logic-based information display; it reflects the deep connotations and significance of culture through a complex network of relationships characterized by dynamism, diversity, and complexity.

When it comes to the learning outcomes of cultural knowledge, it extends beyond cognitive enhancement to include the shaping of emotional bonds and emotional resonance with a sense of togetherness. Emotion, an often-neglected aspect in rational-logical Western academic discourse, has recently been recognized as a crucial driving force in human development. Emotion is the intrinsic energy of human actions (Li, 2007; Spinoza, 2009), propelling us toward acts and imbuing them with specific moods or colorations (Illouz, 2007). The cultural symbolic system crystallizes intense emotional memories. People evaluate cultural performances based on how much they evoke deep emotional bonds through symbolic presentation, bodily engagement, and collective effervescence. For example, collective celebrations during traditional festivals are meaningful only if they evoke collective memory and emotional resonance. Art, as a core form of cultural expression, directly touches people's emotional worlds, creating deeper emotional bonds through unique sensory experiences. Emotions, therefore, are not just individual but also collective, productive, and social, forming the foundation of social order and maintaining the vitality and significance of culture.

The transmission of cultural knowledge involves systematic interpretation rather than mere explanation and reasoning. Traditional logic-centered academic curricula emphasize the unidirectional transmission of knowledge from a single source to the receiver, focusing on factual and logical consistency, authority, and objectivity. In contrast, the transmission of cultural knowledge is more about storytelling and interaction, constituting a dynamic, interactive process known as narrative cognition (Bruner, 1986). This process can be explored from two dimensions: Firstly, the transmission process is a process of interpretation. The acquisition of cultural knowledge relies on the interpretation and explanation by "expert individuals." These individuals, whether elders, peers, or younger generations, act as witnesses and transmitters of the inherent meanings of culture. This form of transmission includes not only written records but also oral traditions, visual expressions, and other forms. For instance, mythological

Stories and folklore often undergo variations and reinterpretations, with each generation interpreting cultural symbols and meanings according to their understanding and context. In the highly developed digital age, the multi-layered and multi-subjective nature of this cultural knowledge transmission becomes even more intriguing. Secondly, it is a process full of mutual construction and reconstruction. Cultural inheritance is not merely about passively receiving knowledge but is achieved through participants' experiences and interactions. Active involvement and firsthand experiences in cultural activities enable participants to gain a deep understanding of the essence of culture. Imagination plays a crucial role in this process (Wulf, 2018), allowing individuals to transcend their limitations and connect with cultural symbols and contexts, thereby deepening their understanding and experience of cultural knowledge. Through imaginative participation, individuals can place themselves in the context of cultural transmission, resonate with predecessors, and better understand and carry forward the spirit of culture.

In conclusion, when we regard culture as a form of knowledge and a significant learning resource, we also expand the dimensions of rational-logical-centered academic education. This approach helps us understand the multiple possibilities of knowledge, including practical wisdom, relational content, emotional outcomes, and a bidirectional, multi-layered transmission process. For those of us living in an era of cultural globalization, understanding the epistemic value and curricular significance of culture is particularly important. Emphasizing the curricular significance of culture fosters cross-cultural understanding and respect, promotes dialogue and exchange among cultures, and thus advances the harmonious coexistence of global cultures. The diverse cultures created within different spatial domains are like “pomegranate seeds”, closely held together yet constituting distinct worlds.

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Building Inclusive Society Through Inclusive Education

Zhicheng Huang*

Inclusive education is a new educational philosophy as well as a new field of international educational research. Realizing that inclusive education depends on the practice in inclusive schools. Therefore, inclusive schools are new educational models that differ from ordinary, special, or integrated schools.

The practice of inclusive education is not only significant in education but also in society as a whole, because the goal of inclusive education and inclusive schools is to realize an inclusive society with social justice, opportunity, equality, and democratic participation (Tony Booth & Mel Ainscow, 1998). As a result, the barriers to realization within an existing society have to be identified, blamed, and removed. The philosophy of inclusive education guides us to practice in inclusive schools, and the inclusive schools practice promotes us towards realizing an inclusive society.

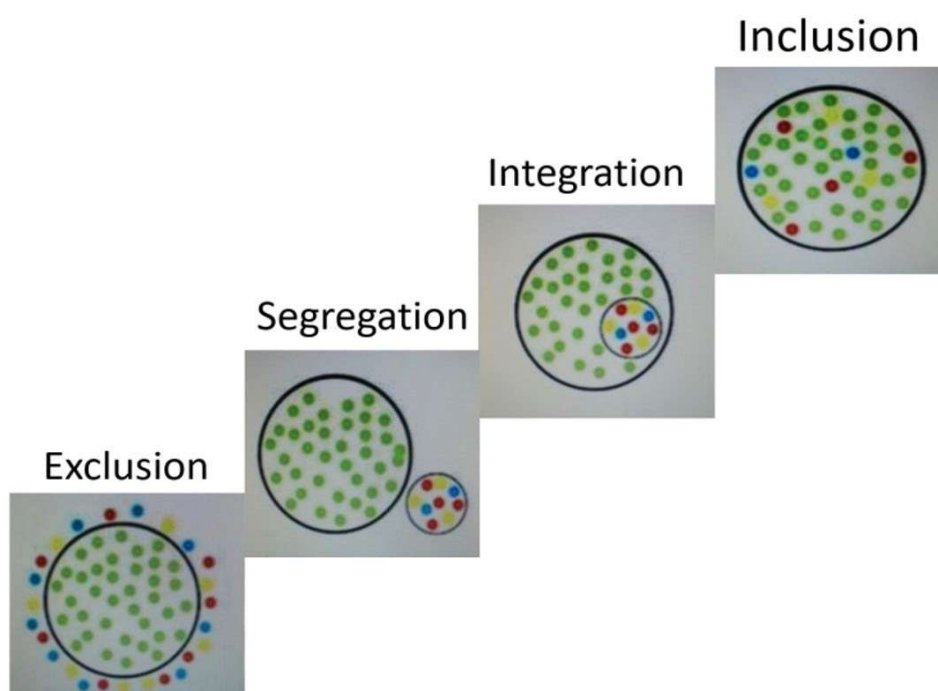
The first official use of the term “inclusive education” was at the World Conference on Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain, organized by UNESCO in 1994. Inclusive education has been promoted worldwide since 2008, at the 48th session of the International Conference on Education, held in Geneva, under the challenging theme “Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”. The World Education Forum, held in Incheon, R. Korea, by UNESCO in 2015, put forward the world education goal for 2030: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All (UNESCO, 2001). Obviously, inclusive education is now one of our educational goals and tasks for the future of every country.

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From 1994 to the present, many countries around the world have been implementing inclusive education in schools in different ways, according to their varying understandings of the concept.

Through many years of research and practice on inclusive education, we, the Center for Inclusive Education, understand about inclusive education like this: Inclusive education is a continuing educational process, in which include all students, oppose discrimination and exclusion, promote participation, pay attention to cooperation, meet the different needs and for the propose of building inclusive society (Huang, 2004). During the process of practising inclusive education in China in the 80s of the last century, we can see that the focus is only on disabled students in special education, and more attention is given to how to enable disabled students from special schools to attend regular schools. But the regular schools do not prepare for disabled students. The teachers do the same work, using the same curriculum and instruction. This is, we call it, integration stage. There are 4 stages from exclusion to inclusion. The integration is just like inclusion in form, but not the real inclusion. The regular school has to make many changes, shifting from the traditional education concept to the inclusive education philosophy, from a unified curriculum and instruction to multiple, differentiated curricula and instruction, to meet the different needs of different students.

From exclusion to inclusion



Our concept clearly expresses that the school has to include all students, opposing exclusion. But more important is how to treat the different students in school. Every student is different and has different needs, so education must adapt to students' needs rather than expecting students to adapt to a fixed curriculum and instruction.

Only through inclusive education can a truly inclusive society be built. But inclusive education is an ongoing process and has a long way to go. It is not just about disabled students entering regular schools. It also needs to consider the education of other excluded children, such as immigrant and vulnerable children.

Inclusion means including the excluded. It relates to human rights, education, democracy, equality, and diversity (Felicity, 2000). Inclusive education also aims to create a welcoming community to share blessings. Thus, inclusive education has a deeper social meaning. It is the same concept, expressed differently, as Global Education, Global Citizenship Education, and Sustainable Development Education.

Currently, China advocates building a community with a shared future for humanity. We believe that such a community should be inclusive, free from exclusion and discrimination, and in which everyone, without exception, is a member, is welcomed, and participates fully. Such a community is, in essence, an inclusive society. We have already implemented inclusive education in our schools and achieved significant progress, yet we still face a number of challenges and unresolved issues. We therefore look forward to further exchange and mutual learning with colleagues from around the world through Global Commons Review.

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Exploration of the Value of Ethnomathematics in Mathematics Education

Binyan Xu*

Background of the development of ethnomathematics

In the 1980s, research on ethnomathematics emerged and developed in the international mathematics education community. As the earliest advocate of ethnomathematics, Brazilian mathematics educator D'Ambrosio pointed out that mathematics is a cultural phenomenon shaped by diverse cultural, social, and historical contexts (D'Ambrosio, 2006).

Some researchers (Saxe, 1988) have observed that Brazilian children from impoverished families exhibit two distinct behaviors in mathematics. When they sell candies and other items on the street and engage in transactions, they are proficient in calculating prices and demonstrate skilled calculation skills. However, when they study mathematics in school, their performance in mathematical calculations is very poor. D'Ambrosio pointed out that there is a certain “cultural conflict” that leads to significant differences in this learning behavior (Saxe, 1991). The term “school mathematics” refers to the mathematics taught in schools. There is also a culture called “everyday mathematics”, which refers to the mathematics used by specific cultural groups, such as different ethnic groups, urban and rural communities, professional groups, or children of a specific age group.

Therefore, mathematics should not be seen as a universal, singular entity but as a product of diversity that varies across cultural contexts. In the field of mathematics

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education, people promote more fair and inclusive mathematics education through research on ethnomathematics, and recognize and respect mathematical traditions from different cultures, cultivate students' interest and understanding in mathematics, and improve educational equity.

Research on ethnomathematics in mathematics education

Mathematical knowledge, skills, and methods from different ethnicities and cultures are usually imprinted with their unique historical, traditional, and social environments. So ethnomathematics research focuses on cultural diversities related to mathematics, mainly exploring the correlation between mathematics and culture, and the diversities of mathematical thinking in different cultural backgrounds.

Because the understanding and development of ethnomathematics are closely tied to specific cultural and social contexts, interdisciplinary research methods are needed to explore its meaning and characteristics in depth. That means ethnomathematics research usually involves multiple disciplinary fields, including mathematics, history, anthropology, education, etc. Ethnomathematics research focuses not only on mathematical knowledge and skills themselves but also on their impact on society and culture. By studying the characteristics and development of mathematics across different ethnic groups, we can gain a deeper understanding of communication and interaction among cultures and promote intercultural understanding and exchange.

Research on ethnomathematics usually considers the historical background of mathematical knowledge and methods. By tracing the development of mathematics in different cultures, we can better understand the evolution and characteristics of ethnomathematics, as well as its relationship with contemporary mathematics education. The research on ethnomathematics is closely related to the practice of mathematics education. Researchers often explore how to integrate ethnomathematics into mathematics education, design and develop corresponding teaching resources and methods to promote students' learning and understanding of mathematics (Meaney et al., 2022).

In summary, ethnomathematics research in mathematics education has characteristics such as cultural diversity, interdisciplinary nature, social significance, historical consciousness, and educational practice. Research on ethnomathematics provides important theoretical and practical support for us to deeply understand the relationship between mathematics and culture and promote the development of mathematics education.

Ethnomathematics teaching approach

Most countries have cultural diversity and differences that affect mathematical knowledge in different ways. How to apply ethnomathematics to mathematics classroom teaching is a great concern in mathematics education (Machaba & Dhlamini, 2021). The ethnomathematics teaching approach aims to help students better understand and apply ethnomathematics knowledge and enhance their abilities in mathematical thinking and practical problem-solving. Therefore, the teaching approach has the characteristics of cultural integration, practical orientation, situated teaching, interactivity and cooperation, and the enhancement of critical thinking.

Specifically, the ethnomathematics teaching method emphasizes integrating mathematical knowledge with the cultural background in which students live. Teachers should introduce unique mathematical knowledge and skills from specific ethnic or cultural backgrounds, help students understand and apply the knowledge, and compare and connect them with contemporary mathematical concepts.

The teaching of ethnomathematics usually focuses on practice and application. Teachers should be able to design practical cases, projects, or scenarios that allow students to apply ethnomathematics knowledge to solve real-world problems. Such a practice-oriented teaching method can enhance students' interest and motivation in learning and improve their learning outcomes. In addition, the ethnomathematics teaching approach emphasizes situating mathematical knowledge in specific contexts. Teachers should design scenarios that relate to students' lives and the cultural environment in which they live, allowing students to learn and apply mathematical knowledge in practical situations. Such a situated teaching method can enhance students' understanding and perception of mathematics and improve their learning effectiveness.

Furthermore, ethnomathematics teaching methods advocate interaction and cooperation among students. Teachers should design group activities or collaborative projects for students to explore and solve problems together. Through interaction and cooperation, students can exchange ideas with one another, thereby deepening their understanding and application of ethnic mathematical knowledge.

Finally, ethnomathematics teaching methods encourage students to develop critical thinking skills. Teachers should guide students to think and analyze ethnomathematical knowledge, allowing them to examine and understand mathematical prob-

lems from different perspectives. By cultivating critical thinking skills, students can gain a deeper understanding of mathematical knowledge and apply it to real-life situations.

Ethnomathematics cases in Chinese mathematics education

China has 56 ethnic minorities, each with its own cultural characteristics and having nurtured different forms of mathematics. Learning mathematics cannot be separated from the relevant cultural background. In recent years, Chinese mathematics education researchers have conducted research on the mathematical culture of ethnic minorities, fully exploring and showcasing their rich and colorful cultural heritage, and accumulating a wealth of mathematical cultural materials. For example, prayer beads are the most commonly used counting tool among Tibetans in China. When calculating various things in daily life, they are usually removed from the beads worn around the neck or hands for counting or calculation. The maximum number of beads used for counting can reach one billion (He et al., 2021)



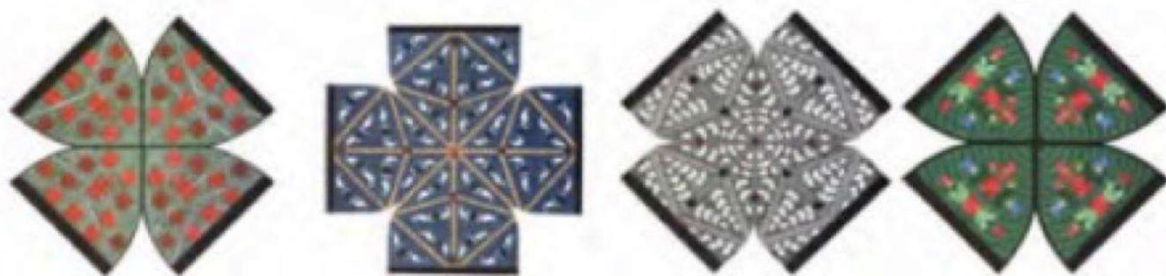
Pic. 1 The prayer beads used by Tibetan people in the pastoral areas of Aba Prefecture in China (He et al., 2021, p.73)

Another example is about Miao's clothing. Miao embroidery on Miao clothing showcases unique art, with a wide range of embroidery themes including dragons, birds, fish, flowers, butterflies, and more. In Miao embroidery, circles, triangles, rectangles, parallelograms, and their transformations are often seen (Li, 2023).



Pic. 2 Miao's clothing (Li, 2023, p. 16)

The flower hat of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China, is one of the symbols of Uyghur beauty. The “four tile” flower hats worn by Uyghur people are handcrafted. People first embroider four petals, then inlay these four pieces, sew them together, and finally inlay them with black velvet edges to form a three-dimensional flower hat. The Uyghur flower hat features exquisite, varied patterns. The patterns are mostly based on natural images, such as Xinjiang flowers and fruits, and are combined into various geometric shapes (Liu & Wang, 2016).



Pic. 3 Four petals unfolding diagram of Uyghur flower hat (Liu & Wang, 2016, p.12)

In the field of mathematics education, ethnomathematics is increasingly valued as an educational and teaching resource. However, we need to think more about how to leverage the educational value of ethnomathematics and what kind of value it has (Tang & Zhang, 2014). On the one hand, ethnomathematics can broaden students' intercultural understanding of mathematics. Ethnomathematics helps people understand that people from different societies conduct their mathematical activities in different ways, and that the progress of these activities depends on culture (Zaslavsky, 1998). On the other hand, ethnomathematics can help rebuild students' confidence in learning mathematics. Integrating ethnomathematics activities in teach-

ing can help students develop a positive attitude towards mathematics and recognize its position in culture, especially students can eliminate the viewpoint that mathematics is reserved for elites (Piccolino, 1998). Therefore, advocating ethnomathematics instruction is an important way to pursue fairness in mathematics education.

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The Dialectics Between Global and Local: Competency-Based Education Reform in China

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Introduction

With the expansion of the global knowledge economy, numerous countries have recently redirected their educational objectives and policy discourses toward competency-based education (CBE). CBE has emerged as a ‘global education policy’ (Tromp, 2018, p. 162). CBE transcends traditional literacy and numeracy skills and cognitive mastery of subject knowledge, emphasizing the ability to apply knowledge to solve problems in various contexts, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and creativity. As a global education policy, the recontextualization of CBE within nation-states has not been sufficiently studied (Anderson-Levitt & Gardiner, 2021; Tromp, 2018). This study aims to examine China’s CBE reform by specifically analyzing the motivations behind China’s adoption of CBE, the content of CBE policies, and how these policies, under the interplay of global and local forces, integrate foreign educational philosophies while retaining distinctive Chinese characteristics.

Motivations and Rationales for China’s Adoption of CBE

In the era of the global knowledge economy, education is perceived as a critical factor in enhancing the competitive advantages of nations (Dale, 2000). Since the 1990s, the

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international community's call for CBE has intensified, attracting the attention of Chinese policymakers and researchers. The primary motivation for China's adoption of CBE is to align with global educational reform trends and enhance the international competitiveness of Chinese education (Lin, 2016). Additionally, China's adoption of CBE has intrinsic motivations, primarily to adapt to political and economic development needs by cultivating innovative talents. CBE reform is considered significant for promoting personal success, social well-being, national economic prosperity, and addressing global economic competition (Deng & Peng, 2021), aligning with China's demands for cultivating innovative talent. Dissatisfaction with the existing education system (Phillips & Ochs, 2003) constitutes another internal motivation for proactive policy transfer among Chinese education policymakers. Traditionally, Chinese education has been dominated by exam-oriented practices, prioritizing academic achievement over moral development, with students exhibiting weak social responsibility, innovative spirit, and practical abilities (MoE, 2014). Chinese policymakers and experts view CBE as holding significant methodological value and providing insights for reforming the traditional Chinese educational model, which emphasizes knowledge transmission, rote learning, repetitive practice, and teacher-centered instruction (Lin, 2016).

Policy Initiatives of China's CBE

To advance the implementation of CBE reforms, the Ministry of Education has undertaken several key measures. Firstly, the Ministry has developed a framework for the key competencies of Chinese students, drawing on the frameworks of three international organizations – OECD, UNESCO, and the UN – and referencing key competencies frameworks from twelve countries and regions, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Finland, Hungary, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Japan, while also considering traditional Chinese cultural content and current needs (Lin, 2016; Deng & Peng, 2020). In October 2016, the Ministry of Education released the key competencies framework for Chinese Students. This framework defines the essential moralities and key skills for lifelong learning and social development, with the core objective of cultivating well-rounded individuals across three dimensions: cultural foundation, autonomous development, and social participation. This is synthesized into six primary qualities: humanistic literacy, scientific spirit, learning to learn, healthy living, responsibility, and hands-on abilities and innovation, refined into 18 essential points, such as problem-solving skills.

Secondly, the Ministry has revised the curriculum standards. The Ministry revised the curriculum schemes and standards for general high schools and compulsory education in 2017 and 2022, proposing subject-specific competencies for each subject. For example, the subject-specific competencies for high school mathematics include mathematical abstraction, logical reasoning, mathematical modeling, visual imagination, mathematical operations, and data analysis (MoE, 2020b). The revised curriculum standards propose the development of integrated courses and interdisciplinary thematic learning, with an emphasis on enhancing the connection between curriculum content, student experiences, and societal life (MoE, 2022). Furthermore, the standards call for a shift from the traditional lecture-based teaching approach to student-centered pedagogies (MoE, 2022).

Thirdly, the Ministry has revised textbooks. The new textbooks, based on subject-specific competencies, emphasize selecting content relevant to students' life experiences and social development realities, focusing on the design of contexts, activities, and problems, and reflecting interdisciplinary knowledge.

Furthermore, the Ministry has revised the college entrance examination evaluation system. The *Gaokao*, a national high-stakes paper-based test for college admissions, is being reformed under the CBE framework, focusing on two main aspects: reforming the examination content to emphasize students' ability to apply knowledge in analyzing and solving problems and innovating question formats by enhancing the design of situational contexts (MOE, 2019). These reforms reference the PISA assessment framework and aim to integrate contexts, subject content, and key competencies (Yang, 2018). Additionally, the reforms seek to advance college admissions by incorporating comprehensive quality evaluations as a significant criterion for admission (MoE, 2019), aiming to shift the focus from solely exam-based evaluations. Nevertheless, only slight adjustments have been made to test subjects, content, timing, scoring methods, and reporting methods, while maintaining the unified high-stakes *Gaokao* system (Pan, 2021).

Moreover, the Ministry has promoted teachers' professional development. The Ministry organizes various types of training for in-service teachers and also views *Jiaoyan* as a principal strategy for supporting CBE implementation. *Jiaoyan* differs from general professional development by focusing on research, emphasizing how teachers teach and how students learn. The *Jiaoyan* system integrates collective discussions, reflections, research, design, and critical thinking, ultimately forming a large learning community (Cheng, 2021). After decades of development, the *Jiaoyan* system and its practices have become a vital cultural component (Cheng, 2021),

recognized as a ‘globally acknowledged educational asset’, playing a unique role in teacher development and educational reform (Song & Wu, 2023).

The Chinese Characteristics of CBE Policy

As some studies have noted, transferred educational policies undergo variations not only during internalization or indigenization but also during decision-making and implementation (Tan, 2016; Yang, 2023). The CBE policy in China exhibits hybridity, integrating domestic and international concepts and practices. On the one hand, it incorporates foreign educational ideas, such as referencing international experiences to develop the key competencies framework and the curriculum schemes and standards. On the other hand, it retains unique Chinese elements, primarily in three aspects.

First, prioritize moral education. The developers of the key competencies framework explicitly stated that moral cultivation is the core of the framework (Lin, 2016, p.134). The new curriculum standards consistently emphasize the importance of ‘prioritizing moral education’ (MoE, 2022, p.4) and identify ‘social responsibility’ as a key educational objective. This emphasis on moral education is rooted in traditional Confucian cultural thought, in which morality is the fundamental goal of education (Deng & Peng, 2021).

Second, reinforcing national identity. ‘National identity’ is one of the key competencies included in the key competencies framework and is deeply integrated into curriculum standards. The curriculum standards emphasize core socialist values education, collectivism and patriotism education, and education on traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture, and socialist culture (MoE, 2018). China’s CBE aims not only to reflect new requirements for talent cultivation in the new era and embody advanced educational philosophies and ideas (MoE, 2020a) but also to maintain cultural uniqueness in the face of globalization trends.

Third, emphasizing subject-specific competencies. Chinese CBE policymakers believe that to implement key competencies, it is necessary to develop subject-specific competencies tailored to each subject’s characteristics and practice them through subject teaching. This approach of transforming general competencies into subject-specific competencies aligns with the nature, characteristics, functions, and tasks of subjects. One of the developers of the new curriculum standards suggested that China’s subject-specific competencies provide a ‘Chinese solution’ for solving similar curriculum construction problems worldwide (Cui, 2018). However, this approach has faced

some criticism. Some researchers argue that subject-specific competencies are more ‘subject-based’ rather than ‘competency-based,’ significantly undermining the holistic educational ambition of CBE, posing a real challenge to educating for the whole person (Zhao, 2020). In practice, each subject tends to operate in isolation, lacking communication between subjects, making it challenging to connect subject-specific competencies with overarching general competencies (Guo, 2016). Additionally, teachers who focus solely on subject-specific competencies, reinforced by the high-stakes Gaokao system, are likely to continue traditional subject-based, knowledge-centered CBE practices (Deng et al., 2024).

Conclusion

China’s CBE reform case illustrates that CBE undergoes temporal and spatial changes during the process of policy transfer. As Torres, Arnove, and Misiaszek (2022) have noted, despite significant impacts of globalization, each nation-state has unique historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts, economic needs, and deeply rooted educational traditions that reshape and redefine global educational ideas. The friction between global education and local needs often give rise to new educational approaches. However, despite strong political commitment to CBE in China, there remains a significant gap between policy and practice, with local governments, schools, parents, and teachers to varying degrees ‘ignoring’, ‘resisting’, or ‘opposing’ the actual implementation of the reforms (Deng & Jiang, 2023; Deng et al., 2024; Deng & Zhan, 2022). This is because CBE’s philosophies and practices, originating from Western cultural contexts, conflict with the Chinese culture and examination system that do not emphasize critical thinking and innovation, leading to substantial resistance from social and parental beliefs.

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Scientific literacy in China: Policy and research in - and out-of-school settings

Guopeng Fu

In the most recent *Handbook of Research on Science Education (Volume III)*, Osborne (2023) distinguished scientific literacy as science-related capabilities for competent insider (science specialists) and competent outsider (citizen). Helping students become competent in these two different contexts requires two sets of instructional models, making it a challenge for science education reforms around the globe. This essay briefly discusses China's efforts to address this challenge.

Policy

As an internal slogan for science education reforms, scientific literacy is also underlined in China's policy statements and curriculum guidelines related to science education in the past forty years. Scientific literacy was first introduced by scholars in the field of comparative education in the 1980s and “discussed within science education circles in parallel with the discussions regarding quality education” (Wei & Thomas, 2005, p. 1483). In in-school settings, the term first appears in *Outline of curriculum reform of basic education* in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001), marking the start of the eighth round of national curriculum reform. A set of curriculum standards was then issued in 2003 to replace previous teaching syllabi. Scientific literacy, inquiry, and science for all children became the cornerstones of science curricular standards in this reform (Liu et al., 2012). Ten years later, in the *National mid- and long-term education reform and development framework (2010-2020)* (Ministry of Education,

2010), scientific literacy remained a key element of science curriculum standards (Liu, 2012). During the second decade of the 21st century, scientific literacy continues to be articulated and consolidated in policy documents related to science education. In 2017, the curriculum standards for senior high schools were revised and updated based on the 2003 standards, featuring core competencies in each subject (Ministry of Education, 2018). The term core competencies was developed to align with the central government's overall educational vision, 'fostering integrity and promoting rounded development of people' (Yao & Guo, 2018, p. 1918). Following the updates for senior high schools, curriculum standards for compulsory education (grades 1 to 9) were published in 2022 (Ministry of Education, 2022). Core competencies remain a key feature in these standards. Core competencies in each subject were constructed by respective specialists and authorities. Its embodiment in the science subjects generally involves big ideas in the subject matter, scientific thinking, scientific inquiry and practice, and social responsibilities.

These documents provide guidance for in-school scientific literacy. The notion was first introduced and further consolidated for more than twenty years. It starts as a vague notion for cultivating a well-rounded person and is specified in four core competencies. Although this notion still seeks to capture a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills related to science, the consistency of policy documents continues to support schools in training competent insiders.

For out-of-school settings, the State Council of the People's Republic of China issued the *Outline of the action plan for improving scientific literacy for all (2006–2010–2020)* (State Council of P.R. China, 2006) (hereafter shortened as the 2006 Outline) in 2006. This is the first time in China's history that the term "civic scientific literacy" has appeared in a national policy document (Chen et al., 2009). This outline proposed different action plans for four groups: minors, adults in rural areas, adults in urban areas, and government personnel, extending the reach of scientific literacy beyond school systems. Fifteen years later, the State Council promulgated the new *Outline of the action plan for improving scientific literacy for all (2021–2035)* (State Council of P.R. China, 2021) in 2021 (abbreviated as the 2021 Outline), aiming to continuously raise China's civic scientific literacy. This document proposed additional action plans for five groups: youth, farmers, workers, seniors, and government personnel.

The policies for civic scientific literacy, in tandem with policies for in-school scientific literacy, set out plans to improve the scientific literacy of the general public from 2006 to 2035. While the implementation of in-school scientific literacy is directed by the Under the Ministry of Education, the enactment of action plans for

civic scientific literacy is in charge of the China Association for Science and Technology.

Terminology

This section presents key terms and their translations used in in-school and out-of-school settings, with the aim of providing a nuanced understanding of scientific literacy in China. These terms include quality in quality education, literacy in civic scientific literacy, and competency in science core competencies. All three terms in Chinese are translated as *suzhi/suyang* (素质/素养). *Suzhi* and *suyang* are interchangeable in their everyday meaning, referring to quality and competencies that are cultivated without rather than growing within (Organisation Department of the CPC Central Committee & China Association for Science and Technology, 2011). Quality (*suzhi*) education is the overarching objective for the eighth round of pre-collegiate curriculum reform in China, launched in 2001. It refers to a person who is well-rounded, skilled in various realms, moral, and nationalistic (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). The term was raised during a time when China aimed to train millions of specialised personnel to advance China's modernisation (Wei & Thomas, 2005), as well as as a banner against excessive exam-oriented education (Dello-Iacovo, 2009).

The second term, "civic scientific literacy," is translated into *suzhi* as well (same as "quality"). This term is used in policy documents intended for the general public, such as the 2006 and 2021 Outlines. In the 2021 *Outline*, a citizen who is scientifically literate 'admires scientific spirit, believes in scientific ideas, grasps basic scientific methods, understands necessary knowledge of science and technology, and uses science to analyse, discern, and solve practical problems' (State Council, 2021, webpage). Similar to quality education, civic scientific literacy was proposed and consolidated to enhance innovation capabilities, shape cultural influences, and accelerate China's modernization. It appears that when literacy is translated into *suzhi*, it applies to the general public, whereas *suyang* is often used in a pre-collegiate context, as reflected in the 2017 and 2022 curriculum standards.

The third term, competency in core competencies, is translated into *suyang*. This term is 'the conceptualisation and textualisation of the policy curriculum in China' (Yao & Guo, 2018, p.1918). A student's core competencies should include 1) the capacity to learn, 2) leading a healthy life, 3) social participation and responsibility, 4) practice and innovation, 5) humanistic literacy, and 6) scientific spirit (Wei, 2019). At an

individual level, core competencies are the foundations for Chinese students' lifelong learning and well-rounded development. At a social level, they address the current social, economic, political, and cultural expectations for education. More importantly, the terms “science competencies” and “scientific literacy” are translated into the same Chinese word (both as 科学素养). In other words, scientific literacy is equivalent to core competencies in science.

To point out that the three terms (quality, literacy, competency) are translated into the same/similar words in Chinese is to explain why these terms often appear in tandem in the literature. The two rounds of curriculum reform in 2001 and 2017 (and later in 2022) are guided by the principles of quality education and core competencies, respectively. Scientific literacy can be easily positioned under these two terms due to phonetic similarities and support from the central government (Wei & Thomas, 2005). The broad connotation of these terms all point to the educational ideals of a well-rounded person, serve for the modernisation of China, and leave room for interpretation in practice.

Research

The extant literature on scientific literacy in China centers on the policy documents mentioned in the previous sections. Wei and Thomas (2006) pointed out that scientific literacy was adopted to undermine the content-centered curriculum, with an emphasis on scientific inquiry and the personal and social relevance of science. The use of scientific literacy in this round of reform embodied a shift from elite-oriented to future-citizenry-oriented education and aligned with changes in the international science education community. Yao and Guo (2018) presented major changes to the 2017 curriculum standards for science disciplines, with core competencies and scientific literacy as the focal points. They speculated that the lack of competent teachers and the low status of science courses and science teachers in school systems pose major challenges for successful reform implementation. Empirical research in this area is still scarce. There are a few empirical studies on civic scientific literacy. These studies demonstrated the achievements and challenges of civic scientific literacy in China. 6.20% of Chinese citizens demonstrated scientific literacy in 2015, an increase of 4.7% compared with 1.50% in 2005 (Gao et al., 2016). Chinese science popularization lacks interaction, with limited opportunities for public engagement (Wang et al., 2022).

Concluding remarks

Cultivating both competent insiders and competent outsiders has become the goal and the challenge for global science education reforms in K-12 education. Although China's attempts are still far from successful and lack robust empirical evidence, the separation between in-school and out-of-school scientific literacy, as well as the cumulative effect of policy support, could perhaps provide alternatives for achieving both “science for scientists” and “science for all”. School is traditionally structured as a place to study abstract knowledge and screen specialized talents for post-secondary institutes and the workplace. It perhaps should take more responsibility for achieving the “science for scientists” goal. On the other hand, science education in informal settings such as museums and science centres could incorporate application of science, the nature of science, and social-scientific issues into a variety of fun, unstructured, non-evaluative activities. Science for all is perhaps the responsibility of science popularization.

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International Understanding of Moral Education in China

Fuyan Wang*

Globalization fosters interactions among diverse countries and ethnic groups. Intercultural encounters are intertwined and often clash, necessitating a deep understanding of cultures as the key to effective communication. Owing to cultural disparities and even conflicts, international understanding education is crucial to foster positive and productive exchanges among nations and ethnicities, aiming for global cultural harmony. Cultural diversity necessitates an appreciation of international understanding. In this context, education for international understanding assumes utmost importance. Education must equip the next generation with an understanding of other countries and their cultures. Education for international understanding has emerged as a focal point in education globally.

In the tide of globalization, the Chinese mainland approaches moral education from a global perspective. Moral education in the Chinese mainland emphasizes developing students' international understanding and literacy, addressing the new historical tasks, characteristics, and requirements of the current era, actively following UNESCO's relevant concepts and ideas, introducing international experiences, and responding with policies. It is actively constructing a localized international understanding education system, exploring paths for education for international understanding with Chinese characteristics, addressing social concerns and fundamental moral education issues through high-quality development, and further enhancing the commitment to moral education. This forms a significant component of global education for international understanding.

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I. International Understanding: Core Literacy Development and Localization for Chinese Students

The “National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)” mandates “strengthening education in international understanding, promoting cross-cultural exchange, and enhancing students’ awareness and appreciation of diverse nations and cultures”. The Chinese mainland’s approach to international understanding education centers on developing students’ competencies. In September 2016, the “Core Literacies for the Development of Chinese Students” was published, with international understanding as a critical component. As a vital aspect of the core competencies for Chinese students’ development, international understanding is a character trait and key capability that students must acquire to meet lifelong and societal development needs. In 2020, the “Opinions of the Ministry of Education and Seven Other Departments on Accelerating and Expanding Openness in Education in the New Era” proposed to “intensify international understanding education in primary and secondary schools... nurturing a new generation of youths who are well-rounded in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and practical pursuits, while also possessing an international perspective”. International understanding includes global awareness and an open mindset, understanding the process of human civilization and the dynamics of world development, respecting cultural diversity, actively participating in cross-cultural exchanges, paying attention to the global challenges facing humanity, understanding the connotation and value of a community with a shared future for mankind, and so on. In the era of core literacy, promoting the implementation and development of international understanding education has become an inevitable trend in China’s educational development. Education for international understanding is grounded in one’s own country, fostering a sense of responsibility as a member of the global community while equipping students with a global perspective. It also enables them to maintain a stable value system in a complex global landscape while nurturing their appreciation for their cultural heritage and an inclusive attitude towards world cultures. It aims to cultivate in young people the awareness, competencies, and commitment to actively engage in global public affairs, helping them develop a value-based understanding and proactive behaviors that facilitate cross-cultural interactions and enable them to coexist with those who differ. The education for international understanding in primary and secondary schools focuses on dimensions

such as global awareness and open-mindedness, cultural diversity and differences, global integration, and China and the world.

Education for international understanding in mainland China places particular emphasis on the value of a community with a shared future for mankind. On 11 March 2018, China incorporated “promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind” into the preamble of its constitution. The key to building a community with a shared future for mankind lies in education in universal human values. In practical terms, this involves teaching fundamental human values while fostering a diverse understanding of national and ethnic values, thereby truly nurturing students to become young adults of the new era with a Chinese heart, an international perspective, and the ability to act. From the standpoint of a community with a shared future for mankind, education for international understanding must set objectives to foster “great love, great virtue, and great sentiment,” assist individuals in developing inclusive cosmopolitan sentiments, and support nations in fulfilling their international responsibilities and missions. The role of moral education in schools should encompass both national and global citizenship. Moral education should assist and guide students in navigating the connections and tensions between their national and global citizenship, preventing the segmentation of national identity from the global community’s shared future.

From the perspective of cultural inheritance and dissemination, maintaining cultural confidence and upholding traditional culture in the face of multiculturalism has become a significant issue. Chinese educators adhere to the principle that “what is national is global”, emphasizing national identity in international understanding education and underscoring the traditions and distinctives of various ethnic cultures. In the context of cultural diversity, Chinese moral education firmly adheres to the value orientation of cultural confidence, offering a Chinese approach to “cultural moral education”. Education for international understanding in China emphasizes the inheritance and development of excellent traditional Chinese culture, embeds the core competencies of international understanding within the cultural and historical context of the Chinese nation, underscores social responsibility and national identity, fully reflecting national characteristics. School moral education should emphasize that young students adopt a global perspective, understand other cultures through shared cultural values, especially cultural differences, and use these differences as a basis for appreciating the richness and inclusiveness of human culture.

thereby developing an understanding, respect, and passion for culture. Traditional culture is increasingly becoming an indispensable resource for moral education in contemporary times. Uncovering the “unseen power” within traditional culture guides students to self-improvement and character development, thereby fostering their cultural confidence. With full cultural confidence, they can engage in equal and harmonious communication, correctly understand conflicts arising from differences, and ultimately achieve mutual cultural understanding and respect. By integrating their unique cultural identity into the diversity of world culture, they can lead global cultural development with their outstanding Chinese culture, fostering coexistence among diverse cultures under the concept of “harmonious culture”.

II. The Practice of Education for International Understanding in Chinese mainland: System, Curricular, Student agency, and Teacher professionalism

After years of development, education for international understanding is no longer a fresh and unfamiliar concept in many primary and secondary schools on the Chinese mainland; it has become an integral part of daily teaching and the curriculum in many schools, and a distinctive characteristic of some schools. Many schools promote international understanding through action research based on teaching practice, combined with their own development plans and resource advantages, in various ways. To overcome the limitations of resource integration in promoting education for international understanding, some educational administrative regions in the Chinese mainland have implemented regional integration initiatives through courses, international exchanges, and research projects. For example, in 2008, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games organized the “Unity in Sister Schools” activity to connect and exchange ideas between primary and secondary schools in Beijing and those around the world. This was hailed as the “largest scale international understanding education and sustainable development international exchange action in history with experiential differences”. On the eve of the World Expo, the Social Development Bureau of Pudong New Area and Shanghai Education Press planned to publish reading materials on international understanding for middle and high school students. Many cities also promote the implementation of education for international understanding through international-friendly cities and schools.

Chinese moral education has always emphasized the role of subject curriculum, including both specialized moral education courses and moral education integrated with academic subjects. Therefore, China emphasizes education for international understanding at the national curriculum level. There are many aspects of international understanding that can be integrated into moral education courses in primary and secondary schools. For example, the theme section of “Excellent Traditional Culture of China” emphasizes the importance of understanding exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations, respecting cultural differences, and engaging in dialogue with an inclusive attitude. By collecting representative achievements from different civilizations, students can grasp the principle of “harmony but difference,” appreciate the significance of exchange and mutual learning among civilizations, and develop a global perspective. The effective integration of international understanding in various subject courses involves cross-cultural understanding, the infiltration of international understanding into textbooks, and its integration into teaching. The current curriculum standards for teaching subjects in China include elements of international understanding, emphasizing the need for students to respect and understand cultural diversity, maintain an open mind, and adopt an international perspective. In the 2022 edition of the Geography Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education, both “understanding the world” and “understanding the region” have laid a solid foundation for students to form international understanding literacy. In terms of content, it also highlights the awareness of multiculturalism and common development, such as using graphic and textual materials that reflect race, language, religion, customs, etc., to describe the richness and diversity of world culture, and to establish a sense of respect for world cultural diversity; using examples to illustrate the importance of strengthening national cooperation, and enable students to fully understand the meaning of global village. The Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education History (2022 Edition) fully reflect the brilliant achievements of human civilization and the excellent cultures of other countries and regions around the world, understanding the diversity of human culture, understanding and respecting the cultural traditions of various countries and ethnic groups around the world, recognizing the interdependence between Chinese history and world history, reflecting a perspective and broad mindedness based on China and facing the world, and establishing a sense of community with a shared future for mankind. In addition, some schools actively develop school-based international understanding courses that are suitable for their students. For example, Beijing Shijia

Primary School regards education for international understanding as a comprehensive, practical course, with patriotism as its foundation, and constructs a curriculum framework centered on cultural understanding, national identity, and global responsibility.

Activities are an important means for students in Chinese primary and secondary schools to develop their morality. Education for international understanding in the Chinese mainland highlights interests, experiences, and inquiry, which are targeted and closely aligned with students' actual social and individual lives. Based on children's interests and needs, it fully respects their agency and encourages students' active participation. This kind of education for international understanding fully utilizes project-based, experiential, reflective, and thematic learning methods, following the principles of objectivity, democracy, and integration. It proposes activities based on local culture as the benchmark, international and disciplinary content elements as carriers, sharing and expression as channels, and information technology support. It continuously improves students' learning experience and helps them develop an international understanding. Thematic activities in education for international understanding involve integrating international understanding-related elements into student activities (second classroom), enabling students to develop a comprehensive understanding of multiculturalism and to establish international understanding through participation and experience. Thematic activities mainly introduce different foreign cultures, such as international days, foreign drama festivals, Model United Nations, Chinese-foreign student sports meetings, and art exhibitions. In recent years, thematic activities have become more diverse, presenting a trend of integrating inviting in and going out. Activities such as study tours and research have fostered students' international understanding and literacy.

Education for international understanding in China emphasizes the teacher professionalism. The Opinion on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Team Construction in the New Era proposes significantly improving the overall quality, professional level, and innovation capacity of teachers. The comprehensive quality of teachers includes international understanding and literacy, and various measures should be taken to enhance these, thereby improving their teaching quality. The international understanding literacy of teachers, as defined in the published "International Literacy Teacher Reader" (Zhejiang Education Press, 2019), includes a broad mind and deep local sentiment, awareness of open coexistence and competitive cooperation, respect for the wishes and attitudes of others, acceptance of multiculturalism, basic knowledge, and professional level of international exchange.

Teachers' international understanding of literacy can only be developed through long-term learning and practice before and during their tenure. In the preservice stage, it is necessary to develop a training plan to enhance teachers' international understanding and educational literacy, and to deepen their understanding of international concepts and cross-cultural experiences through courses, lectures, and other means. During the on-the-job stage, it is necessary to conduct specialized teacher literacy training and to build an international platform. Some schools have integrated the cultivation of teachers' international understanding literacy into specific practices across the dimensions of awareness, knowledge, and ability, through curriculum-driven and research-driven approaches, effectively improving teachers' international understanding literacy, including a rich international perspective, an inclusive international attitude, and basic international communication ability.

Striving for Excellence and Equity: Shanghai's Mathematics Endeavor

Yan Zhu

Since the turn of the 21st century, mathematics education has undergone significant evolution in curriculum, teaching methodologies, and assessment strategies, all aimed at providing every student with equitable and high-quality learning opportunities (Croom, 1997). Emphasizing inclusivity, equitable mathematics education seeks to dismantle barriers based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status, allowing each student to fully explore and demonstrate their mathematical potential. Achieving this goal requires close collaboration among the mathematics education community, parents, and society at large to foster a deep understanding of how curriculum standards promote educational equity. Additionally, it's crucial to convey the core philosophy of school mathematics education: the cultivation of students' mathematical literacy. This requires concerted efforts and an unwavering belief that enhancing every student's mathematical literacy is not only attainable but essential.

Educational equity serves as both the bedrock of social justice and a pivotal factor in attaining top-notch education. Since 1994, Shanghai has pursued the audacious objective of “building a world-class city with world-class education” and has taken decisive action. The city's substantial investment in upgrading 230 underperforming primary and secondary schools vividly demonstrates its resolve and capacity to foster equitable infrastructure and enhance the educational milieu (Shen, 2011).

In the ensuing years, Shanghai has consistently deepened its educational reform efforts, spearheading initiatives such as establishing modern boarding high schools and standardizing compulsory education. These endeavors are aimed at

comprehensively elevating educational standards across all schools, ensuring that each institution enjoys balanced developmental opportunities. In parallel with significant infrastructure improvements, Shanghai has actively explored and implemented a range of “soft balancing” measures. These include initiatives such as entrusting the management of rural schools in suburban areas, establishing satellite campuses of prestigious educational institutions, and fostering partnerships between experienced educators and those in need of mentorship. These concerted endeavors have effectively fostered balanced development in urban and rural compulsory education, thereby granting more children access to high-quality educational resources.

In 2009 and 2012, Shanghai became the first mainland Chinese city to participate in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), aiming to conduct an in-depth analysis of students’ learning status in compulsory education. Particularly in the assessment of mathematics during PISA 2012, the project honed in on two crucial indicators of educational equity: the degree of between-school score balance and the extent to which students’ scores are influenced by family background.

The results of the assessment were remarkable, with the average mathematics scores of junior high schools in Shanghai significantly surpassing the OECD average. Regarding score balance, the between-school score variance in Shanghai accounted for only 29% of the total variance, markedly lower than the OECD average of 37%, indicating balanced teaching quality across schools in Shanghai (Lu, 2014). Regarding the impact of family background, the average ESCS level of junior high school students in Shanghai and their schools accounted for only 20% of the differences in mathematics scores between schools. Moreover, the explanation rate for differences within schools was as low as 2%, both figures falling below the OECD average (Lu, 2014). This clearly illustrates that in Shanghai, the influence of family background on students’ mathematics scores is relatively minimal, ensuring effective fairness in educational opportunities.

These findings not only underscore the exceptional quality of mathematics education in Shanghai but also highlight its significant strides in promoting educational equity. This success can be attributed to Shanghai’s long-term implementation of strategies for balanced education development.

In 2016, the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, embarked on a comprehensive review and synthesis of the experience of primary and secondary school mathematics education reform in Shanghai. Through a series of exchanges and seminars, four key insights emerged, covering

areas such as curriculum paradigm revitalization, curriculum execution refinement, assessment framework enhancement, and teaching research support strengthening (Dong, 2018).

Shanghai's approach to mathematics curriculum reform is methodically phased, with each stage focusing on fundamental components such as curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation, with the overarching goal of holistically elevating students' mathematical fluency through collaborative efforts. In 1997, the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission introduced the *Action Plan for Mathematics Education in Primary and Secondary Schools Entering the 21st Century*, providing a definitive roadmap and framework for mathematics curriculum reform. Building upon this initiative, Shanghai further refined its approach in 2004 by formulating the Shanghai Primary and Secondary School Mathematics Curriculum Standards (Trial Draft), complemented by newly crafted textbooks meticulously aligned with curriculum benchmarks, thereby reflecting core concepts and objectives across content curation, structure, and delivery.

In pedagogical implementation, Shanghai continually pioneers innovative teaching methodologies, leveraging approaches such as “conceptual variation” and “process variation” to devise a range of instructional activities, including reading, observation, exploration, and discourse. These activities are aimed at guiding students to comprehend mathematics from multiple angles, adeptly apply mathematical thinking methods, and amass diverse mathematical experiential learning.

Addressing deficiencies inherent in traditional assessment practices—namely, an undue emphasis on rote knowledge, preference for outcomes over processes, and a bias toward written examinations at the expense of practical engagements—Shanghai's mathematics assessment reform actively integrates insights from globally recognized benchmarks (such as PISA) with local realities, gradually sculpting a student-centered mathematics academic quality assessment paradigm tailored to the nuances of compulsory education. This holistic “curriculum-teaching-assessment” integration assures the systematic, pragmatic, and impactful nature of Shanghai's mathematics curriculum and pedagogy, laying a robust groundwork for advancing and deepening mathematics education reform initiatives.

As a pivotal link connecting curriculum, teaching, and assessment, teaching research plays a crucial role in the ongoing reform of mathematics education in Shanghai. Teaching research initiatives at the municipal, district, and school levels have garnered considerable attention due to Shanghai's unique “grand teaching research”

model, which seamlessly integrates rigorous scientific inquiry with practical teaching applications. During the curriculum promotion phase, Shanghai employs strategies such as resource sharing and experience exchange to showcase exemplary schools and teachers, thereby elevating the overall standard of teaching research across the region.

Teaching research departments meticulously organize various activities, including thematic lectures and classroom observation exchanges, intending to assist teachers in addressing teaching challenges, exploring effective pedagogical approaches, and sharing successful teaching experiences. With the progression of curriculum reform, Shanghai's teaching research strategies are gradually evolving towards "individualization, serialization, and empirical verification," transforming key teaching issues into research topics. This guides teachers in conducting thorough investigations and, in collaboration with thematic educational research activities, engaging in collective discussions, practical applications, and reflections to achieve breakthroughs and innovations in mathematics teaching.

By bolstering teaching research efforts, Shanghai continuously enhances educators' teaching proficiency and capabilities, providing personalized education and developmental opportunities for each student. This not only exemplifies educational equity but also serves as a pivotal avenue toward achieving educational modernization. Fairness stands as the bedrock of socio-economic development, particularly in the era of 21st-century globalization. With market competition escalating, robust mathematical and scientific skills are essential for both ethnic minorities and women to thrive in the workforce (Croom, 1997). Thus, the elimination of social injustice in school education and the advancement of excellence and equity in mathematics education becomes our collective responsibility and mission.

Policymakers, administrators, educators, parents, and all sectors of society must collaborate closely to foster an equitable educational environment, ensuring that every student has equal opportunities to enhance their mathematical literacy. To achieve this, the mathematics education sector needs comprehensive optimization across multiple facets, including practice, school structures, policies, curricula, teaching methods, and assessment. It is imperative to prioritize providing additional opportunities for ethnic minorities and women to engage in advanced mathematical learning. Only through concerted efforts to construct a fairer and more inclusive education system can we propel sustainable social development.

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Exploring Rotating Teachers in Changing Communities: Encounter, Belonging, and Agency

Wei Shen, Wanyue Chen*

Teacher rotation has been proposed for decades as an effective strategy to promote equitable education and alleviate the school choice phenomenon (Liao et al., 2019; Wu, 2020). It gained prominence after the issuance of the teacher rotation policy in 2014 by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2014). With the aims of enhancing the balanced development of compulsory education, improving the quality of education in underperforming schools, and equalising the quality of school administrators and teaching staff among all compulsory schools (Wang et al., 2018, 2020). Principals and teachers, particularly those with high-quality skills and qualifications, were encouraged to work in underperforming or rural schools within the locality for a period of time.

Among the regions, Shanghai employed various strategies to promote educational equity and a balanced allocation of teachers. These include incorporating existing teacher flexible mobility into the national teacher rotation policy and establishing unique support networks in each district. For example, Songjiang District has constructed eight learning communities, while Fengxian District has formed school alliances. These initiatives aim to encourage teachers to move within these communities, fostering their professional development and enabling the sharing of high-quality educational resources. In this study, four episodes from four rotating teachers are selected to offer a concise portrayal of teachers' identities and agency within the changing communities.

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The Education Bureau of Songjiang, Shanghai, initiated senior teacher rotation in 2023, from the Shanghai Observer

Episode 1: “They treat me as a member”

I went to a well-regarded primary school in Songjiang District in 2013, and now I'm back for my second year. The strongest impression I got was the dedication of the teachers there. Their professionalism, teaching methods, and the school's overall management left a deep impression on me. However, what truly affected me was the growth in my teaching skills and attitude. One teacher stood out in particular. When teaching handwriting to first graders, he not only explained or demonstrated on the projector but also paid immediate attention to the students' pen-holding posture and handwriting after each character was written, which was very important. Another thing is that even though I wasn't assigned a mentor teacher to work with during the year, I could feel that they treated me as one of their members. Witnessing their commitment to thorough teaching and efforts to address any gaps between students motivated me to become more patient and attentive in my interactions with students. (Teacher Wong)

Episode 2: “I approached it with a learning mindset”

In 2011, I went on rotation to a primary school in Fengxian District. This school was relatively better than ours and was the leader of the district’s school alliance. At that time, I was relatively young and not very experienced, but the school leader chose me, saying it was a good opportunity for me to learn from others. Initially, I was a bit afraid of not fitting in, but after I arrived, I found that the teachers there were quite friendly, and the atmosphere was more than welcoming. We could discuss anything freely, so I quickly fitted in with them. I felt the atmosphere of their school’s teaching and research activities was very good; everyone was enthusiastic and proactive, freely sharing ideas without pressure or obligation. In comparison, the teaching and research activities at our school were more serious and formal. After I returned, I also communicated with our teaching and research group leader. I told him how they organised things there, and we could also consider adopting some of their methods. To be honest, I don’t remember if any of my suggestions were implemented. Overall, I approached the experience with a learning mindset, and it really helped me with teaching. In my opinion, it’s about learning more and understanding what others do. Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses, so I took what was good from their practices and adapted them for our use. (Teacher Fei)

Episode 3: “I went out on behalf of the school”

I began my teaching career in 1999 and went to teach in rural areas for one year in 2009. At that time, another teacher and I had just been promoted to senior positions. The school informed us that volunteers were needed for rural teaching. We thought, who else but us? So, we volunteered. I’m quite shy, and when I first arrived there, I found myself in unfamiliar territory, with no one to recognise me. Eventually, I was introduced by local leaders and briefed on my teaching responsibilities. The workload they gave me was quite heavy. Not only did I have to be a head teacher, but I also had to teach different classes, one in the third grade and another in the fifth grade. I remember I lost 10 kilograms in the first month. As a representative of our school, I felt compelled to excel. I had to put in extra effort to achieve results. After assessing students’ abilities upon arrival, I focused on teaching arithmetic intensively, leading to improved performance within a month. By the time I left, no student in the class

failed the final exam, with the lowest score being 70, which was more than ten points higher than the average score of another class. During my time there, I also brought resources, such as exam papers and practice homework, from my school to share with them. (Teacher He)

Episode 4: “I will focus on my own tasks first”

I rotated to this school just three months ago. Our school leads the school alliance, and they believed that another teacher and I had more experience, so they assigned us here. As part of our responsibilities within the alliance, I brought along a workbook produced by our school, a decision made by school leaders. Moreover, I was the head of the lesson planning team at my previous school, responsible for exam papers, so I brought all of our school’s exam papers with me to share with the teachers here. Currently, I’ve noticed that the quality of teaching and research activities at this school isn’t as good as at our school. However, I prefer not to raise this issue with the school leadership to avoid causing tension among the teachers. As they say, ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do.’ I’ll focus on my own tasks, and whether I can influence others remains uncertain. Some people may be receptive to it, while others may not. You can’t force it. I’ll just take care of my own affairs for now. (Teacher Zhang)

These four episodes depict two distinct approaches to teacher rotation, each revealing the unique identities and agencies cultivated by the teachers involved. In the narratives, teachers Wong and Fei, who transitioned from relatively underperforming schools to high-performing ones, adopt a learner’s mindset. They focus on absorbing exemplary teaching practices and skills from the teachers at rotated schools to enhance their own teaching abilities and improve the quality of instruction at their original schools. However, differences between schools often lead these teachers to focus on imitating teaching techniques, limiting their impact in both their original and rotated schools.

Conversely, teachers rotating to underperforming schools exhibit a greater willingness and confidence in sharing educational resources. Nonetheless, school interactions primarily revolve around resource sharing and exchange, rather than fostering practices conducive to building a mobile community. Moreover, the availability of abundant resources, such as professional and social capital, in certain schools offers teachers

more opportunities to exercise agency. Therefore, we can see that the existing institutional framework provides limited support for teachers seeking to establish new communities beyond their original schools. Teachers' identities remain largely affiliated with their original school, with their agency closely linked to that school and to the disparities between their original and rotated schools.

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Global Citizenship Education in Asian Higher Education: A Student's Voice of CAMPUS-Asia 6

Keying Fang (Emma)*

We live in an increasingly interdependent environment. Globalization brings development but also creates many crises, such as conflict, poverty, climate change, and energy insecurity. In this response, we should pay attention to the quality of education while increasing access to education, which means education is expected to facilitate international cooperation and innovatively promote social transformation towards a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world¹. Globalization expands the geographical scope of higher education, promotes innovation, and imposes new demands on its core function. Higher education must cultivate students who have global awareness, embrace inclusive, multicultural values, and master the knowledge and skills essential to the era of globalization. Therefore, cultivating global citizens is a new requirement in the era of globalization and a new goal for higher education.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

In 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) identified "fostering global citizenship" as one of its three education priorities. Then, this concept was well developed in SDG 4.7. Global citizenship refers to a sense

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1. UNESCO (2015). Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives.

of belonging to a broader community and common humanity. It emphasizes political, economic, social, and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national, and the global². In GEFI, Ban Ki-moon proposed global citizenship as a new model for intervention to secure peace and sustainable development in the global system.

Global Citizenship Education aims to empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world. In 2015, UNESCO released *Global Citizenship Education Topics and Objectives* to guide the GCE implementation. UNESCO pointed out there are three learning domains of Global Citizenship Education³:

1. Cognitive: knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities.
2. Socio-emotional: values, attitudes, and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully.
3. Behavioral: conduct, performance, practical application, and engagement.

CAMPUS-Asia6 (CA6)

Launched in 2012 during the fifth Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit, the “CAMPUS Asia” program—short for “Collective Action of Mobility Program of University Students in Asia”—aims to enhance the international competitiveness of Asian universities, cultivate next-generation talents, and foster peace and stability through educational exchanges. Now, the “CAMPUS Asia” program is entering Mode 3, and participating institutions have expanded to include the top 50 universities of the three countries. Besides, the participating institutions have launched the “China-Japan-ROK +X” model to attract more universities from ASEAN countries to unite Asian civilizations through educational exchanges⁴.

“CAMPUS-Asia6” (CA6) is one of the projects in “CAMPUS Asia” with the topic “Development Program for Professionals in Educational Policy Management Contributing to Solving Global-Scale Issues”. The objective of CA6 is to nurture professionals in education policy management who can plan and formulate education policies from this new

2. UNESCO (2014). Global Citizenship Education: Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st Century.

3. UNESCO (2015). Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives.

4. Peking University. (n.d.). About CAMPUS Asia. <https://campusasia.pku.edu.cn/en/About/About.htm>

perspective and realize them in the context of each country and local region⁵. East China Normal University, University of Tsukuba, Korean National University of Education, Khon Kaen University, Institut Teknologi Bandung, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia form a university union, and every school will select graduate students major in Education, Innovative Material or Environment Science, and dispatch them to each university.

CAMPUS-Asia6 and Global Citizenship Education

CAMPUS-Asia6 aligns closely with the goals of Global Citizenship Education. Both help youth build understanding across borders and cultures, see and think about the world from local and global perspectives, and encourage them to cooperate and solve global issues together. During the program, all students experienced three stages.

1. Network independent learning of general education courses

In this stage, students took two online courses. And the topics of these two courses are all related to the SDGs, especially those targeted at education, the environment, resources, and materials.

2. Interdisciplinary exchange study, cooperative research, experiment, and field investigation in the project cooperation with universities

At this stage, students are dispatched to cooperative universities for three months. Students who major in science will engage in cooperative research and experiments in the lab. Students majoring in education will learn about the education system of their dispatching country and, through field investigation, see how education policies are established and implemented.

3. Propose their own education policies at international seminars based on research results.

An international student conference will be held at this stage.

I participated in CA6 from August 2023 to February 2024. At that time, I was introduced to Global Citizenship Education for the first time. Then, I sincerely feel that I am both a citizen of China and a global citizen, and that my capacity for global citizenship was significantly enhanced through this program. Hence, I concluded my progress based on the three-dimensional model of GCE:

In the cognitive dimension. First, my global perspective has broadened. Previously, my research was confined to educational theory and China's education policies, but

5. University of Tsukuba. (n.d.). Background and Purpose.
<https://campusasia6.education.tsukuba.ac.jp/background/#>

the courses in CA6 have expanded my global view and enriched my knowledge of international organizations such as the UN, UNESCO, and OECD.

Secondly, before participating in the project, I had noticed many problems in China's rural high schools, such as students' lack of self-recognition, unclear future directions, vicious competition, and the high pressure of high school study. In the discussion part, I discovered that these problems are common in Asian countries. How to promote sustainable development for students within an exam-based education evaluation system is a challenge we all face. Apart from this, there are more severe, widespread global issues we are facing together. Therefore, I realized that countries should cooperate and establish a sense of community.

Thirdly, my capacity for critical thinking has improved. In CA6, all lessons were student-centered, and everyone should share their thoughts in class. Since we had different backgrounds and experiences, our views were diverse. In the classes, professors would create a safe, warm atmosphere that allowed students to express their thoughts freely and listen to others with open minds. Gradually, I found that I moved from just listening to listening with thinking. I compared various perspectives and thought about why there are differences. Most importantly, this thinking process helps me target the areas of my learning that are unknown, and, with my increased desire to learn, I have conquered the fear of asking questions in public.

Fourthly, when a problem-solving solution was proposed, my plan became more comprehensive and practical. The fieldwork in CA6 allowed me to leave the library and observe the actual educational context. So, I gained a more complete understanding of the process of formulating, implementing, and evaluating education policies in Japan. These in-person experiences reminded me to think more systematically in my subsequent research studies, to notice the connections and limitations of reality, and to propose feasible, concrete solutions.

In the socio-emotional dimension. First, my English skills and cross-cultural communication capacity were enhanced. In the process of getting along with each other, we all respect each other's cultures, beliefs, and customs, and show a desire to learn about one another's cultures. In addition, during the conversation, we tried to avoid sensitive topics that could cause conflict. I have kept in touch with these friends after the program and gained valuable friendships.

Second, during one of the CA6 seminars, the professor introduced us to refugees displaced by war and guided us to consider how we can address this issue. I was angry about the war and heartbroken about the victims. The reality of injustice and un-

fairness made me more determined to pursue the common good, such as peace, social justice, and fairness. And I believe that education can play a positive role in achieving the common good.

In the behavioral dimension, CAMPUS-Asia6 helped me identify my future research interests. I began to explore Career Education and Global Citizenship Education in CA6. I chose Career Education as the topic of my graduation thesis, hoping that my research could, to some extent, alleviate the problems of high school students' confusion about their futures and their stressful academic lives. What's more, Global Citizenship Education has inspired me to pursue equity and justice in education, transforming motivation into practical actions to achieve inclusive, equitable, and quality education.

In conclusion, CAMPUS-Asia6 enhanced my Global Citizenship capacity, especially on the cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions, though I still need to improve my behavioral capacity. Reflecting on my experience, I found that when I focus closely on global issues, I get some pessimism and negative emotions. If these emotions affect my life, I consciously avoid following the festering global issues. This is not an ideal virtuous cycle, so I hope to find a balance in the future that will strengthen my beliefs as a global citizen, help me see and think about global issues rationally, and do my best to solve them. Next, for future Global Citizenship Education, I suggest that all students be more actively involved in practice while learning theoretical knowledge. At the same time, schools, society, and the government should cooperate to enrich behavioral activities, enabling youth to realize the meaningful impact of their actions in achieving a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world. Such a sense of accomplishment and gain will strengthen their beliefs as global citizens.

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16

“The National Needs are My Research Pursuits” - The Academic Career of the Comparative Education Scholar Zhao Zhongjian

Lei Zhou*

Reflecting on the past 30 years of teaching and research in the field of comparative education, Zhao Zhongjian, a dedicated scholar, has always adhered to the principle of “rooting in the local while seeking a global vision”, and tightly integrated his personal research interests with national needs and societal realities. “The national needs are my research pursuits” is the tenet he has consistently followed throughout his decades-long research journey.

From being admitted to East China Normal University to pursue a graduate degree in comparative education in 1984, to obtaining his Ph.D. and working at the university in 1990 until his retirement in 2020, Zhao Zhongjian’s research directions have undergone several changes. His research fields involve Indian education, student financial aid in higher education, UNESCO documents analysis, education quality management, school leadership and management, U.S. education policy, primary education, national innovation policies, and STEM education. Each transition is closely related to the context of the times and national needs.

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Research on Student Financial Aid: Serving the Higher Education Reform

In early 1992, while studying and conducting research at the Institute of Education, University of London, Zhao learned of the then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's "Southern Tour" talks, which signaled China's shift from a planned economy to a socialist market economy. He believed this economic transition would inevitably lead to educational reforms, particularly in higher education funding. As higher education shifted from free to fee-paying, the existing student financial aid system required corresponding reforms. However, research on student financial aid in China was still a "blank slate" at that time. Therefore, studying higher education student financial aid from a comparative perspective and learning from developed countries' experiences and reforms was crucial.

Beginning with his article "On Student Loans at American Universities," published in *Education and Economy* in late 1993, Zhao focused on student financial aid research and published several articles. In October 1996, he published his monograph *An International Comparative Study of Student Loans in Higher Education*. This series of studies partially filled the research gap on student financial aid in Chinese higher education. More importantly, this research, closely linked to higher education reforms, garnered attention from policymakers. In 1995, Zhao was invited to participate in a research group on the scholarship and loan system for university and college students hosted by the Ministry of Education and to participate in the drafting of the "National University Scholarship and Loan System Reform Plan." This is an evident example of educational research serving government decision-making.

Translating and introducing UNESCO documents: Serving education to "Face the World"

Entering the 1990s, issues such as rapid population growth, widespread environmental degradation, and persistent poverty became increasingly global. Concerned with international educational developments, Zhao keenly realized that it was necessary to understand the common educational problems the international community has faced. Only in this way could China's education reform and development in the 21st century be placed in the broader context of global educational development and the vision Deng Xiaoping put forward — "education should face modernization,

face the world and face the future” can be realized. Introducing, translating, and studying the activities and documents of international organizations like UNESCO and its International Bureau of Education was perhaps an effective way to achieve this goal.

To keep Chinese educators informed about significant international events, Zhao timely introduced these major activities and ideas to the Chinese education community. For example, he helped plan the UNESCO Education Series and compiled *The Mission of Education: The Education Declaration and Programme of Action for the Twenty-First Century* (1996), which gathered declarations and action plans that emerged from major international education conferences and summits during the first half of the 1990s, covering important themes such as education for All, inclusive education, and education for international understanding and a culture of peace. At the end of 1999, he continued to lead the compilation, translation, and publication of *Historical Trajectories of Global Educational Development: 60 Years of Recommendations from the International Conference on Education and Research Hotspots in Global Educational Development: Reports from UNESCO in the 1990s*. He also undertook commissioned research projects, including “Research on Community Learning Centers in China” by UNESCO and “Study on the Diversification of Secondary Education Policies and Curricula in China,” funded by the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO. He conducted in-depth research on the theme of “Education for All,” resulting in the publication of *Education for All: The Heavy Responsibility at the Turn of the Century* in 1999.

Research on Total Quality Management in Education: Serving “Improving Quality and Efficiency”

Improving educational quality has been a central theme of global education reform since the 1980s. Western developed countries began implementing total quality management (TQM) in the early 1990s as part of school management reform. In response to the practical needs of Chinese education reform, Zhao closely followed this emerging field of educational research and began studying TQM and other modern management theories in 1995. He explored how to apply these ideas and theories to support China’s education reform. He published more than 20 articles in this field, including “An Initial Exploration of General Elements in Higher Education Quality Management,” “SWOT Analysis in Higher Education Quality Management,” and “Total Quality Management in Education: A New Educational Management

Concept.”

Zhao has long believed that theoretical research should serve practical reform. Therefore, he not only sought to pioneer theoretical research on quality management but also sought to apply his findings in school practice. “To go into schools to experiment” became his goal for connecting theory and practice. Since 1998, while advocating for and disseminating TQM ideas in education, he has guided several primary and secondary schools in establishing quality management systems aligned with school management practices in accordance with ISO 9000 standards. These experiences also led him to expand his research to the professional development of school principals. He directly guided and mentored about 50 primary and secondary school principals, developing unique professional development curriculum modules for principals, including concept renewal, institutional support, resource development, curriculum, moral and technical leadership, cultural cultivation, and self-evaluation feedback. He systematically built a “research-based” mentoring model for school principals.

Continuous Specialized Research: Serving Education Innovation and Development

Entering the 21st century, Zhao continued to expand his specialized research fields, focusing on American education policy and primary education, national innovation policies, and STEM education.

In his research on American education policy and primary education, Zhao focused on the promulgation and implementation of American educational policies, curriculum, and pedagogical reforms, and school management. He promptly analyzed various U.S. federal policies, especially educational legislation, and introduced the latest developments in U.S. curriculum and teaching reform to China. In 2008, he participated in preliminary research for the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) and served as the leader of the “International Educational Development Research” project group. He was also appointed to the first and second “National Basic Education Curriculum Textbook Expert Working Committee” and the “Shanghai Basic Education Curriculum Reform Expert Working Committee,” applying his knowledge and research findings to support national and local education and curriculum reforms.

From early 2006, Zhao entered a new research field of national innovation policy from an educational perspective, and published articles and translated works on the

innovation policies of European and American countries, such as “American Education Facing Competition with Innovation,” A Perspective on America’s ‘Innovation Tide’, Technology, Education, Innovation: Keywords in Global Competition. He also published books such as *Leading the World with Innovation: America’s Innovation and Competitiveness Strategy* (2007) and edited and published *the Innovative and Entrepreneurial University* series. During his research on national innovation policies, he found that talent cultivation, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), played an important role in the U.S. national innovation policy. In 2012, he published “Education for Innovation: STEM Education—An Educational Strategy Worth Recognizing and Emphasizing” in *China Education Daily* and launched a STEM education column in *Shanghai Education · Global Education News*. He aimed to raise awareness among Chinese educators about this new trend in the U.S. and other developed countries, advocating for strengthening research on STEM education in China as “an educational strategy worth recognizing and emphasizing”.

Future ecologists: an urban school's quest for eco-technology

The Second Foreign Language School Affiliated
to Shanghai Normal University

The Second Foreign Language School Affiliated to Shanghai Normal University is a suburban school located in the southern part of the Yangtze River Delta, bordering Zhejiang Province to the west. The area where the school is situated features flat terrain, a dense network of rivers and lakes, and an extensive coastline. There are various types of natural landforms such as oceans, islands, mudflats, wetlands, plains, hills, etc., and rich populations of subtropical organisms.

The school is located near Hangzhou Bay and is the urban school closest to the ocean in Shanghai. Its proximity to the Shanghai Chemical Industry Park also makes the quality of the ecological environment a continuously hot topic of concern. With the region's transition from a county to a district, industrial restructuring, and urban transformation, new urban beach areas, Yingwuzhou wetlands, coastal fishing villages, and modern agricultural parks that highlight the new economic pattern of Jinshan's economic development have quietly emerged.

It is against this backdrop that the school has also begun to consider how to draw on the wisdom of nature and rebuild the relationships among humans, nature, and other living beings. We have found that environmental problems are largely a product of technological development, and that new science and technology are effective means of solving environmental issues. It is within this contradiction that we have found a new opportunity and begun to attempt to solve ecological problems with micro-technology, giving rise to a story full of vitality.

Wandering in the “Nature-Friendly” Learning Space

- The Story of the Prince of Insects

Wang Minglong, nicknamed the “Prince of Insects” by everyone, is an ordinary student who is almost obsessed with insects. He often lingers in the “Local Species Conservation Area” on the west bank of the school’s river, where he has found a space to showcase his interests.

Crossing the Zhuiyun Bridge (an ancient stone bridge over the campus river) and entering through a fence gate, you find a winding stone path stretching ahead. This elongated area, covering more than 1000 square meters, simulates the structure of the local Shanghai ecosystem and is constructed by integrating ecological garden construction with technical measures. The area creates micro-terrains and uses water from the Battle Port River to form three ponds of different sizes. The water system introduces a variety of native aquatic organisms in Shanghai, such as the high-bodied bitterling, Qi’s bitterling, green killifish, Du’s pearl mussel, dragon tongue grass, dense-toothed bitter grass, marsh frog, golden-line frog, Chinese giant toad, and so on, for conservation. On the shore, large seedlings of local tree species such as mulberry, *zhe*, *gou*, *jujube*, *pu*, and elm are planted to allow them to grow naturally and gradually form a forest, creating a living environment for shade-loving plants beneath the forest. At the same time, host plants needed by the larvae of Shanghai’s native butterflies and nectar plants needed by the adults are planted, and butterfly larvae and adults, such as the camphor blue swallowtail, jade belt swallowtail, and Pea blue swallowtail, are artificially introduced to help restore their population numbers, forming the integrity of the ecosystem and enhancing the biodiversity within a small range.



Fig. 1 Wang Minglong exploring insects



Fig. 2 Students participating in an ecological expedition

On a sweltering summer day, Wang Minglong once again plunged into this distinctive micro-ecological natural space. This time, disregarding the heat, unafraid of the night, and enduring mosquito and insect bites, he worked continuously for five days. In the park, he climbed high and low, picking up dead branches, examining various leaves, searching for and recording the various insects he observed, and then returned to the laboratory for classification research. With the help of university experts and school teachers, he compiled an insect atlas of the campus, documenting more than 150 species.

Several students like him, through ample interaction with the natural environment, have developed a holistic perspective on ecological issues, the ability to solve ecological problems, and have taken on the responsibility of spreading ecological knowledge and ecological culture, becoming disseminators of ecological civilization and actors in ecological protection.

A Research Platform Breaking Through Time and Space - Cultivating “Future Ecologists”

Every July, the gold medal tour guide, Xiao Ban, and her partners lead visitors on a beautiful encounter with wild animals.

The school’s Institute of Ecological Science and Technology opens its doors in the

scorching summer to host a grand science carnival. A group of student volunteers have

become the brightest scenery in this carnival. They are enthusiastic and smiling, not only interpreting the mysteries of rare animals for visitors but also sharing the little-known stories behind the specimens. Xiao Ban, in particular, uses her infectious language to vividly depict the wild giant panda specimen, as if allowing people to see the national treasure strolling freely in nature.

As a campus museum with more than 2,000 animal specimens, the museum's learning space is like a treasure trove of knowledge, attracting countless curious eyes and showcasing thousands of precious collections. Vivid specimens of protected animals such as the Yangtze alligator, giant panda, golden snub-nosed monkey, Northeast tiger, red panda, and hawksbill turtle seem to be showcasing their unique charm to the world. Most of these specimens were donated by Mr. Tang Shiming (then a professor at Shanghai Normal University) to the school during its early days, from a family of specimen collectors. Subsequently, Mr. Mei Hesheng, a biology teacher at our school, opened the elective course "The Course of Life," which was widely collected, and guided students to make numerous bird specimens in this region. Social-ecological environmental protection enthusiasts Wu Zhengrong and students also donated and helped make some of the exhibits. As a science popularization base and an innovative literacy cultivation base in Jinshan District, the museum learning space presents students' reflections on the ecological and environmental issues caused by common behaviors around them, showcases the biodiversity with regional characteristics, and shares the results of students' participation in ecological science and technology research with distinct themes such as "Ecological Concerns," "Evolutionary Steps," "Island Features," and "Beauty of Transformation."

Shen Yujie, who graduated in 2019, is one of the many students in the district-level Innovation Literacy Incubation Base, which has operated at the school for 15 years. Speaking of her learning experience here, she said, "The specimen museum enriched our high school life and provided us with an excellent teaching atmosphere. Participating in the volunteer work of the specimen museum made me more aware of the importance of ecology to us and to nature. Starting from my first year of high school, I was influenced by an environment that values ecological education, which made me fall in love with ecology, a lifelong struggle goal. Therefore, I chose ecology as my major. Without the three years of high school, I might still have a vague understanding of ecology, thinking at most that it is about making our living environment clean and tidy. But the more I got involved, the more I found it to be an art, a love for the place where you live, and a course that truly makes you understand the relationship between

the environment and humans. I hope everyone will maintain a sense of reverence and attitude towards ecology!”



Fig. 3 Museum Learning Space



Fig. 4 Museum Learning Space Volunteers

Ecological Exploration - “Young Scientists” Face to Face with Top Scientists

In November 2023, at the permanent venue of the World Top Scientists Forum by the Dishui Lake in Lingang, Shanghai, a hundred “Sci-Ters” (youth in science) and their “seniors” - dozens of world’s top science award winners, academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, and senior scientists and young scientists from home and abroad - were engaging in direct intellectual collisions. Our school’s student, Lu Tanghui, was selected through a national competition and had the honor to participate in this (sixth) “World Top Scientists Forum · Science T Conference”. Along with a hundred “Sci-Ters”, he listens to the top scientists’ tutor’s lecture. Under the guidance of top scientists, they discussed three challenging issues, for example, the “Earth 2.0 Program”, presented their results, and received comments from the top scientists.

“I am especially excited to be in such close proximity to Wayne Hendricks (Member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, Member of the U.S. Academy of Arts and

Sciences, and Professor at Columbia University) and Michael Levitt (2013 Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry, Vice President of the Association of the World's Leading Scientists, and Professor of Structural Biology at Stanford University)! “

Lu Tanghui is the third consecutive “young scientist” from the school. In 2021, student Xue Yuchen, through daily life observation, found a significant difference in the growth status of camphor trees inside and outside the school. From this, she actively participated in the school's “Future Ecologist Program”, carried out practical research, and formed her own research results. With this, she was fortunate to become the first student from the school to participate in the fourth “World Top Scientists Forum · Science T Conference” as a “future young scientist,” communicating face-to-face with the world's top scientists. In 2022, Qi Qianqian was selected again for her research on the diversity of summer nectar plants and pollinators in a middle school in Shanghai.

Like Lu Tanghui, Xue Yuchen, Qi Qianqian, and a group of students showed a strong interest in nature, technology, and scientific innovation activities after participating in the school's characteristic courses. They made full use of the school and regional ecological resources and research platforms, carried out testing and analysis of ecological elements such as “air, life, water, soil” in an immersive and open ecological practice field, understood and tried to use scientific and technological means to solve ecological problems around them. They actively participated in campus festival activities such as “Bird-Loving Week, World Water Day, World Environment Day”, carried out science popularization propaganda on the protection of global wild animals and plants, joined the volunteer ranks of ecological venues and environmental public welfare activities, and enhanced a strong sense of responsibility and mission for the better development of future society.



Fig. 5 Hui Lu Tang Hui participating in the Science-T Conference



Fig. 6 Students conducting science experiments

Conclusion

As one steps into the campus of the Second Foreign Language School Affiliated to Shanghai Normal University, the greenery of the large lawn comes to you, and the paths are pleasant to step on. Proceeding along the main road (Camphor Avenue), under the dense shade that blocks the sun, the leaves display a variety of colors—white, bright red, and golden—as do the flowers in shades of pink, purple, and orange, rotating with the seasons. The chirping of birds fills the air, and everyone marvels at this being a garden, a green world teeming with vitality and the fragrance of blossoms, where students are fortunate to study in the tranquility of nature.

To help students feel close to nature, the school has always been committed to creating an open, diverse, and inclusive natural environment. The overall planning of the campus's aesthetic education layout, the pursuit of an ecological and poetic campus environment, is the background color of our story, and there will be many more such stories to come.

“Pandas Travel the World” - A Chinese Story in Lights and Shadows

Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University

The folk proverb of Sichuan says, “If you are young, you will never enter Sichuan, and if you are old, you will never leave Sichuan.” --Chengdu, a city you don’t want to leave. Zhuge Kongming’s “The Longzhong Pairing” states, “In the treacherous passes of Yizhou, with fertile lands stretching for thousands of miles, it is the land of abundance.” Rich in historical sites and cultural heritage, one can today seek wisdom at Mount Qingcheng and pay homage to the waterworks of Dujiangyan, and tomorrow can linger at the “Baodun Culture” and “Jinsha Civilization”; the tempting hotpot and skewered dishes, spicy and invigorating, ignite the taste buds late into the night, making one linger and forget to return; the charming cultural connotations, Sichuan opera face-changing, shadow puppetry, and the deep night lights narrate the long stories of Bashu.

Li Bai, with his head held high and drinking deeply, waved his sleeve and said, “Heaven created Chengdu in nine days, with thousands of households and gates entering the painting.” The land of abundance, with its outstanding people and auspicious land, should nurture countless talents. In 2018, on this southwestern land, a school rose from the ground, telling an educational story that keeps pace with the development of the world and the rejuvenation of the nation. It is the Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University. Upon entering the gate, the golden words “Study for the rise of China” are strikingly visible, as if hearing the sound, it is as loud as a bell; today, the young people studying here, with their burning dreams, write swiftly, paying tribute to their clear ambition with “Strive for the prosperity of the world.”



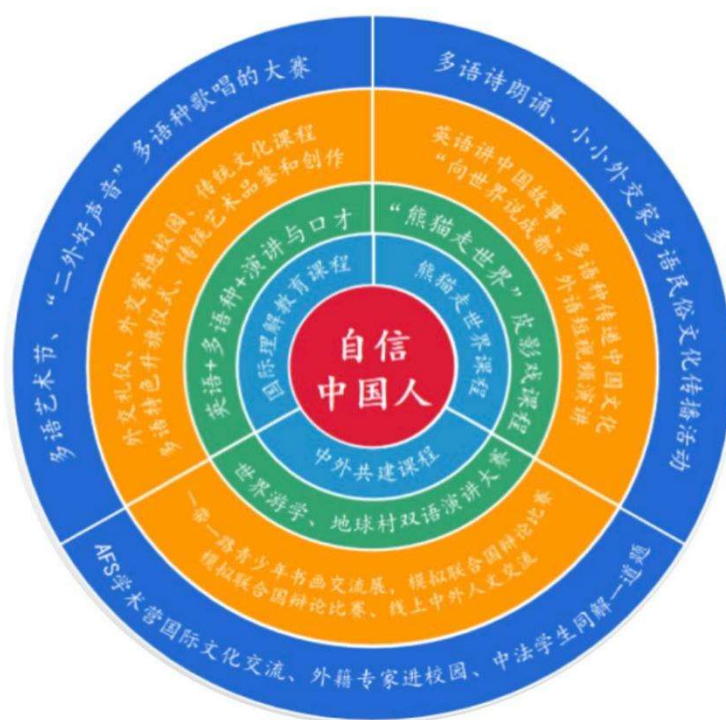
Pictures of the school's philosophy of education on the wall

Giant pandas, a symbol of Sichuan, live in the dense bamboo forests at altitudes of 2,600-3,500 meters above sea level in Sichuan and are loved around the world for their endearing, clumsy appearance. From the 2008 Beijing Olympics mascot “Fuwa,” to the “Kung Fu Panda” fire all over the world, and the hard-to-get “Ice Dun Dun” of the 2022 Winter Olympics, the image of the giant panda has become deeply rooted in people’s hearts. At the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, “Hua Hua”, the top female star, attracts tens of thousands of domestic and international tourists every day. The giant panda is a national treasure of China and a calling card of Chengdu. In 2019, Chengdu became the first pilot zone for cultural exchange between China and foreign countries designated by the Ministry of Education, and conducted research on “Construction and Practice of Curriculum on Cultural Exchange between China and Foreign Countries Based on International

Understanding.” Among them,

the “Pandas Travel the World” course, created with the influence of the “panda” IP, is committed to using English to introduce the cultures of Wuhou Temple, Du Fu’s Thatched Cottage Museum, Jinsha Site, and other treasures of the Tianfu region to the world, becoming an important course with the most local characteristics and the most capable of showing the characteristics of cultural exchange between China and foreign countries in Chengdu. Since the course is aimed at foreign students, course developers need to explore the essence of culture as the course’s main theme [1].

Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University centers on the educational goal of “confident Chinese with national self-confidence and global competence.” It designs and offers “Cultural Exchange between China and Foreign Countries” courses in three categories based on learning objectives: international understanding courses, courses co-built by China and foreign countries, and the “Pandas Travel the World” course.



Framework for the course “Chinese and foreign humanistic communication”

Sichuan shadow puppetry, exquisitely crafted, meticulously carved, and richly colored, often imitates the forms of Sichuan opera while also incorporating the characteristics of Shu embroidery, paper-cutting, and Sichuan New Year paintings, which are part of the folk art. [2] Inspired by the design, the “Art of Light and Shadow: Shadow Puppetry” series of courses at Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International

Studies University was established. As part of the “Pandas Travel the World” course in Chengdu, it showcases the unique charm of “Sichuan shadow puppetry” to children overseas. The course team carefully designs the course segments, starting from watching shadow puppet performances to get in touch with Chinese culture, to encouraging children to collect images, texts, and physical objects, then visiting and learning the art of shadow puppet making, and comparing the differences between Chinese and Western performing arts, ultimately achieving the goal of understanding Chinese traditional culture and respecting cultural differences.

To enable overseas students to have a direct understanding of shadow puppetry from the start, the students of Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University have put in a lot of effort, gearing up and taking to the stage, personally operating in the interplay of light and shadow, and narrating many well-known folk tales. Look, “Wu Song Fights the Tiger” is coming! The children scripted, made shadow puppets, arranged props, performed, and recorded videos themselves, using a mixture of English and Chinese to tell the well-known story of a hero in China.



Seventh-grade students presenting a shadow puppet show, “Wu Sung Fighting Tiger”

Teachers have put in a lot of effort to fully present the charm of Sichuan shadow puppetry. They brainstormed, held meetings, designed courses, applied for research topics, and produced bilingual teaching materials and study manuals, and finally formed a brochure of their achievements. From thought to action, they have refined the vivid appeal of the China-Foreign cultural exchange course. After the successful application for the research topic, the teachers immediately started to implement it, carefully writing continuous class lesson plans for successive classes. To avoid the concept of “shadow puppet” becoming abstract and obscure, they used computers, blackboards, PPT, and shadow-puppet props and materials together. In the performance of shadow puppetry, the teachers also prepared carefully, selecting stories from the perspective that is easy for foreign children to accept and polishing them several times before the final product. In addition to “Wu Song Fights the Tiger,” they also presented popular and philosophical stories such as “The Monkey King takes the banana fan”, “Piggy eats the watermelon,” “The tortoise and the hare race”, etc. From the history of shadow puppetry to its schools, and from production to inheritance, this “cultural panda” is alive in the world.



The “Shadow Puppetry in Light and Shadow” Brochure

If the essence of the “Pandas Travel the World” course is open communication and cultural exchange, then “Shadow Puppetry in Light and Shadow” is just one case. Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University cultivates “little diplomats,” allowing children to step off campus and into the symbols of Chengdu's culture. “Jinli” — a popular tourist spot in Chengdu where foreign friends gather. Our students are confident and generous, using as many words as they know to have pleasant conversations with foreign tourists. “Pandas” serve as a calling card to attract the world’s attention; the young students of Beijing International Studies University are rising stars, shining brightly in all directions.



Students interacting with foreigners in Jinli

The “China-Foreign Cultural Exchange Course” at Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University is diverse in form and rich in content: hosting ambassadors from various countries to enhance comprehensive qualities; welcoming international exchange students for a friendly sports match; participating in overseas study tours to countries such as Belarus, Japan, and Australia to broaden horizons; taking part in the “Model United Nations” conferences, “World Youth Diplomacy Envoy” competitions, and other activities to exercise language and thinking skills. On the land of Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University, all

teachers and students who are willing to study for the rise of China and strive for the prosperity of the world will realize their dreams in the vast field of courses, writing one touching educational story after another.

Conclusion

The Chinese nation, through the cleansing of the long river of history, has accumulated a rich heritage of intangible cultural heritage. These cultural heritages have not only laid a profound foundation for the Chinese nation but also carry the genes of Chinese civilization's origins. As China moves towards the world and integrates with the international community, it must leverage the cohesive and identifying roles of traditional culture. With the in-depth development of China's basic education curriculum reform, "transforming the uniformity and conformity of the curriculum into respecting diversity and individual differences" has become a significant initiative. Chengdu High School Affiliated to Beijing International Studies University adheres to the principle of deeply cultivating patriotic hearts and nurturing an international perspective. Teachers and students, by continually pursuing their passions, become more confident and stronger, thereby closely integrating their personal growth, national development, and global prosperity!

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A cultural sustainability model under relational ethic: tea, Zen culture and communitarian village

Xiaopeng Shen & Zhen Guo*

Sustainability is a concept that attempts to address the urgent need for a long-term perspective for socio-economic growth and environmental protection in the context of globalization and environmental crisis triggered by a hyper version of global capitalism. In an important way, discussions around sustainability challenge everyone to reflect on the normal GDP and social justice development model to include the planetary health and the livelihood of future generations of humans and other species in measurement (Misiaszek, 2019; Khan, 2010).

However, one significant problem with the current UN SDGs or the so-called SDGs wedding cake, which is popularized by the Stockholm Resilience Center to organize the seventeen UN targets into a three-layered holistic development model (biosphere at the bottom, society in the middle and economy on top) (Stockholm Resilience Center 2016; UN, 2015), is the lack of a cultural dimension. The narrow pursuit of economic growth and wealth accumulation has been widely criticized by social justice advocates and environmentalists, who call public attention to the costs of increasing social inequality and environmental devastation often neglected in the traditional industrial development model (Gadotti, 2008; Misiaszek, 2019). However, what role do cultural identities play in a sustainable model? How do memories and beliefs inherent in local cultural practices and ceremonies impact the way people perceive relationships with fellow community members, visitors from afar, outside business owners, and even other life forms sharing the same life environment?

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To ask a further question, to what extent shall we consider the importance of local cultural knowledge in building a sustainability model relevant to its local social and historical context? It is argued that a practical and culturally relevant sustainability model should always consider local knowledge of well-being and a life of meaning, because it is this connection with local history and heritage that will provide a resilient foundation for the realization of the UN SDGs. In addition, it is wise to find inspiration from generations of life practices and ancient wisdom on how to live a good life and sustain healthy relations with the environment.

A culture of relational ethics for sustainability

Relationships have always been a central concern for East Asian societies because the Confucian ethic places great importance on family-based clans, which often operate under a patriarchal system in which males dominate power relations. However, there is another philosophical lens that examines Confucian family-based ethics through the lens of a relational ethic of care and love. The Confucian relational ethic, deriving from the very idealistic pursuit of benevolence and harmony, points to a care-based ethical model for establishing relationships and pursuing a harmonious development model considering the other and the environment, rather than just an institutional structure oppressing the female members of the society (Tu, 2001; Zhao, 2011).

In a Confucian relational model, one is always expected to show care and love to those related to one, and it is through extending this care and love that one can find peace and harmony in the daily practice of relationships. In an important teaching, Confucius mentions to his disciple Yan Yuan, “Love those who are close to you, and respect those who are distant. Thus, you can care for all beings in the world” (*Analects* Translation by A.C. Muller, Chapter 6th Section 3rd). There are three layers of care and love discussed here. The first is the natural love and care we show to those related to us, such as family and community members. Only if parents show love and care to the younglings can they expect the same love and care when they grow old and need care from their grown children. This is a common concept that sustains the family relations in many Confucian societies, where parents are willing to sacrifice a lot to the benefits of their young children, though this sacrifice does not always bear happy fruits. The second layer is to those who we don’t know but recognize as fellow human being. They can be portrayed as outsiders, foreigners or the other, but they are ultimately recognized as a fellow human being who can be taught the benevolent way

and therefore should be treated with respect and benevolence. The third layer goes a little further, including all the beings in this circle of care and love, and asks us to appreciate all beings for their lives and existence with us in the environment. When one truly learns the benevolent way, it becomes natural to practice it in daily life and to treat all the beings around one with a care-based relational ethic. The compassion one can show to a cat or a plant is no different from the compassion one can resort to when one treats one's family members. Therefore, this relational ethic of care and love is deeply rooted in one's value and belief system and hence guides one's daily life as a cultural compass.

After showing the role the Confucian relational ethic plays in establishing a sustainable relationship with others and the environment, it is suggested that we can look at the concept of sustainability from a culturally relevant perspective and build sustainability models based upon local tradition and heritage, which shall promote a more practical path to sustainable development and encourage the multiplication of locally relevant sustainability models. In the following, a cultural sustainability model case is presented to show how tea as an environmental heritage, Zen culture as a cultural heritage, and one village as a communitarian group combine together to sustain a slow economy model that attracts tourists and small business owners and benefits the economic and cultural well-being of those sharing the same space.



Picture of the entrance to the White Happiness Bridge Village. The old bridge crossing a stream leads to the residential area and tea fields. The huge stone established by the bridge says “white happiness household”

A sustainable model of tea, Zen culture and communitarian village life

If there are two cultural artifacts a visitor to China shall not miss, many would agree to include China’s tea culture and Buddhist temples. It is actually not easy to avoid encounters with these two cultural symbols when you travel in China. White Happiness Bridge Village, located in Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang Province, is renowned for its tea heritage and proximity to Ling Yin (Spirit Hiding) Temple. Among the villagers, there is a belief that the origin of their village name is linked to an ancient bridge that connects the village to a pine-tree-lined path leading to the busy city center, where you may find yourself mesmerized by a display of the modern city skyline and traditional Chinese water-mountain scenery. Interestingly, what now attracts groups of eco-tourists to this hidden village, with only one path across a small bridge to the modern, fast-paced urban life, is its ability to present a sustainability model that draws wisdom from three important cultural heritages: tea garden and culture, Buddhist Zen culture, and a communitarian village lifestyle.

With China's economic growth in the past few decades and the increasing demands for leisure life and leisure products, White Happiness Bridge Village has enjoyed tremendous economic success through combining the forces of its three cultural heritages in building a slow life economy and branding its slow life culture. Tourists seeking a mindfulness experience through tea and Buddhist Zen culture find their way to stay for a tea day or a vegetarian Buddhist lunch in the village. This eco-tourist experience offers opportunities for those willing to slow down and listen to the wisdom embedded in tea ceremonies and Buddhist Zen teachings to seek inner peace. For the villagers who have lived with tea fields and a Buddhist temple for generations, cultivating a sense of love and care for others comes through daily work with tea plants, occasional exchanges with Buddhist monks, and a communitarian lifestyle in which community members are treated like family. The slow-life culture and its economic success can be attributed to the triangular relationship among tea, Buddhism, and community. It is through this mutual interaction and the fostering of three cultural heritages that the village presents itself as a sustainability model that supports healthy relationships with oneself, others, spirit, and the environment.

In the following, three stories about these healthy relations are presented through fieldwork and interviews with local villagers to offer an insider's perspective on this sustainability model built upon a triangular relationship of tea, Zen culture, and community. The first story offers a glimpse of how tea plays a significant role in a local village family and shows the relationship between tea and people through the processes of cultivation, processing, and tea ceremony. The second story explains how Buddhist monks interact with local villagers through the concerted cultivation of tea, in which the Buddhist concept of *Karuna* (sympathy) connects everyone living in the same space. The last one explains how this communitarian lifestyle affects those who share the same space due to the rise of the slow economy in recent decades. The current participants in the village share an understanding of mutual support and interdependence and thus voluntarily form a kind of cooperative economic community.



Picture of Zhen's father-in-law stir-drying newly picked green tea leaves with a group of eco-tourists observing the process

Story of a tea-growing family

It is another spring season, which means being busy with tea leaf harvesting, tea processing, and receiving visitors for fresh green tea and tea culture experiences from all over the world. Zhen is obviously on center stage, offering tea-leaf harvesting tours, arranging tea-processing lessons, and performing traditional tea-drinking practices for visitors. Because of her excellent English, she has been the tea culture ambassador that villagers go to whenever there are foreign visitors. In a way, Zhen takes on the burden of promoting the tea business and tea culture of the White Happiness Village to the outside world. She is happy that her English skills, combined with the TEA sommelier certification, have brought great benefits to her, her family, and the whole village. However, Zhen was not born in the village, and she married into it shortly after graduating from college. It was through this marriage that she became attached to tea and tea culture. Her father-in-law is a traditional tea farmer, which is easy to deduce from the calloused hands he shows us, because tea processing in a traditional manner requires one to use one hand to constantly stir and press fresh tea

leaves in a mildly heated wok until the tea leaves dry up and preserve all the freshness in a dehydrated condition. Naturally, Zhen's father-in-law becomes a good teacher in tea cultivation and processing for her, and she has been a quick learner, adjusting to the pace of life of a tea farmer. However, learning how to grow and process tea is not enough for Zhen, who always believes that, given her college major in English, she can do much more to benefit her family and help expand the influence of the White Happiness Bridge tea.

While bearing a second child, Zhen decided to study tea culture and ceremony performance for tea sommelier certification. Her ambition to advance her certification level would not be possible without support from both sides of her family. Her mother and mother-in-law came to help with the children, and her father-in-law continued to support her in developing knowledge of tea and tea culture. In 2022, she earned the Second Level National Certification, the second-highest level for tea sommeliers. With the accumulated knowledge and certification in tea and tea culture, her family and some business investors from outside partnered together to open a tea space shop where she is able to offer tea garden tours, perform tea ceremonies, and tell stories of tea and herself to those who seek an experience with Hangzhou green tea in this small village.

Zhen and her family are particularly proud that they are no longer traditional tea farmers who plant, process, and sell tea for a living. Now they can pass on this knowledge and experience of tea to others, and tea has become a medium that brings people together to share their stories and deepen their understanding of nature and one another. For her, the way of tea is not only about tea but also about people, about how the performer conveys a philosophy of life and relationships to guests through tea.

Zen culture and Tea

Because of the village's proximity to the Ling Yin Temple (a Buddhist temple with over 1,000 years of history), the tea village is also influenced by Zen Buddhist culture. With the integration of tea and Buddhist culture in the region, local Buddhist monks are also involved in tea cultivation, harvesting, and processing. This offers another spiritual and philosophical dimension to this tea village.

In traditional Chinese tea culture, one branch combines tea and Zen Buddhism, often called Zen tea. This Zen tea culture instills Zen culture into tea practices

and adds a strong philosophical and ethical layer to traditional Chinese tea culture. The tea practices are elevated to a spiritual level through the Buddhist concept of Karuna (sympathy), and a series of ethical principles are developed to add another layer of humanistic care and mutuality to tea culture. Gratitude, inclusiveness, sharing, and a fateful connection are emphasized to help individuals improve their mindfulness, awareness of this interconnectedness, and sympathy for all (Bao, 2023).

Zhen's family, like other villagers, believes that Zen culture adds another layer to their tea practices and that they appreciate a harmonious relationship with the Buddhist temple. It has become an important tradition that at the beginning of the spring season, when the harvest time comes close, they invite Buddhist masters from the Temple to perform a prayer ceremony in the tea fields to not only ask for a good spring harvest, but also to add a Zen spirit into the tea plants, which helps to bring balance and harmony to the whole village as well.

These days, Zen culture has become an indispensable part of village life. On the surface, there are tourist shops that sell Zen culture souvenirs and vegetarian restaurants offering a rich array of dishes implying Zen's mindfulness. Occasionally, the Buddhist monks from the temple have exchanges with villagers and business owners about vegetarian food and Zen tea performances. The villagers offer oblations on major Buddhist festivals, such as Buddha Day and Parinirvana Day, in this mutual relationship.

A communitarian spirit in a developing slow economy

A walk through the village leads us to a signpost at the crossroads, which points toward the Cooperative Economic Community Center. During Mao's era, cooperative production units were a popular means of organizing agricultural and industrial production at the village and county levels. The socialist reform removed all private ownership, and production revenue belonged to the collective or the cooperative economic units.

However, some in the village would like to trace this communitarian spirit to the Confucian Clan culture that this village was used to build upon. It was a Confucian tradition to extend care to those close to you, including family and community members. In the old days, there were only three clans in the White Happiness Bridge village, and it was common to find during the spring harvest season that the family with more labor hands would extend help to those short of labor, and the family receiving help would return the favor with home-cooked food or pigs. Interestingly, Lucian Pye, a well-known Sinologist, once argued that Confucianism's emphasis on

social harmony and hierarchy offers some psycho-cultural justification for the development of communism in China (1968). The communitarian spirit has always been there in the village, and it just changes its name to suit the demands of the times.

In the past decade, with the increasing popularity of slow economy and leisure culture in China, young people started to look to villages like the White Happiness Bridge for new opportunities in both economic success and lifestyle change. The local government also recognized the significance of this village's two important heritages—tea and Zen culture—and provided financial support to develop the local economy. Then, roads were renovated, and small villa-style buildings were constructed to attract both tourists and outside investors. Now, there are actually more non-village members working, living, and doing business in the village than local villagers. Villagers benefit financially from this influx of both investment and tourists, with some renting out their family houses to outside investors to open tea gardens, view hostels, or vegetarian restaurants. Despite the mixing of populations from different backgrounds in the village, the sense of harmony and interdependence endures and extends to those who join village life or stay only for an afternoon tea.

With the rise of social media, this communitarian spirit has expanded into virtual space. During an interview with Zhen and her business partner, they showed us a WeChat group (the most popular social media platform in China, with more than 1 billion registered users) called White Happiness Brothers and Sisters, with 135 members. This is a social media group for business owners who use it to share information about recruiting, new product ads, and customer needs. Occasionally, people in the group also ask Brothers and Sisters who share the same physical and virtual space for small favors. When Zhen's family harvests new green tea in the Spring, she likes to share updates on price and quantity in the WeChat group. Hostel or restaurant owners sometimes order tea from Zhen and help forward tea-selling information to their customers to support their choices. Thus, this virtual social media group has inherited the communitarian spirit of the old days and now transforms itself into a shared economic model through which businesses refer to one another, and a slow-growing economic community takes shape, with everyone in the group understanding the importance of interdependence and harmony.

Conclusion

During conversations with villagers or business owners at the White Happiness Bridge, over tea and local delicacies, the question of happiness often comes up, with people sharing their different views on what it is. Most people visiting the village sense the leisurely environment, where they can break from the normal work pattern of an accelerated modern society and find some peace to reflect on the meaning of life. In the words of local villagers, they are often appreciative of this inherited environment of tea and Buddhist Zen culture, and they know this is the source of their happiness. Through daily practices of tea culture and a communitarian, slow-economy way of life, everyone participating in this village life comes to appreciate the importance of interdependent relationships. Tea farming marks the beginning of the village; Zen culture lends the village a distinctive character in its tea practices; and the communitarian life fosters a sense of belonging and interdependence among those living there. However, it is the combination of these three heritages that forms a cultural sustainability model focusing on a relational ethic of care and love. The lesson for visitors to the village is the independent nature of the White Happiness Bridge's happiness. The village's sustainability model brings social, economic, and environmental benefits to everyone who shares space; however, it is the three cultural heritages of tea, Zen culture, and communitarian spirit that foster a value of care and interdependence and lay the psycho-cultural foundation for its sustainability.

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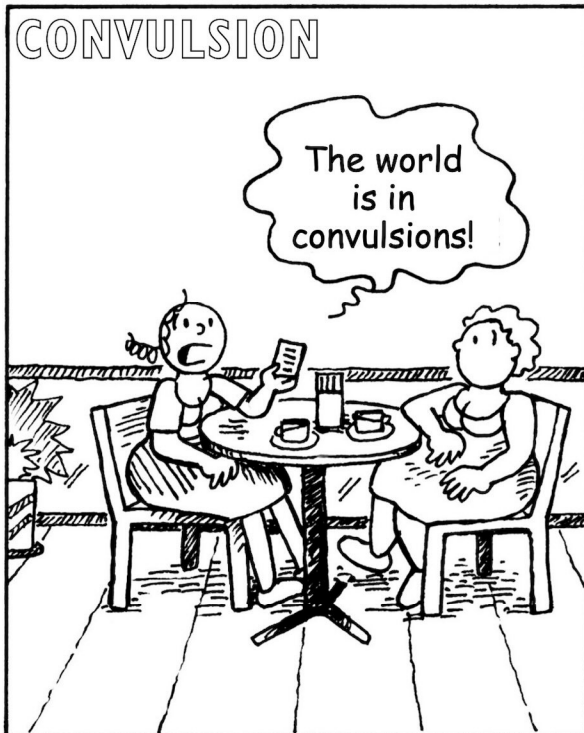
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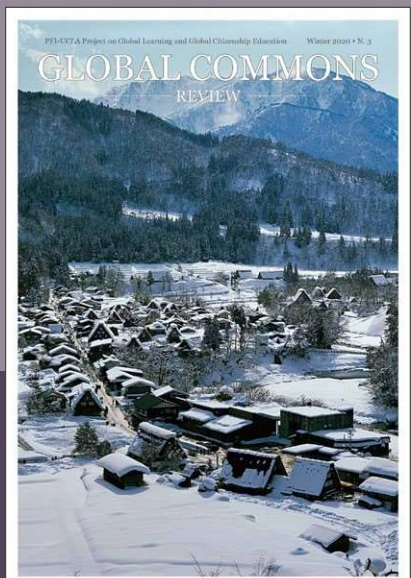
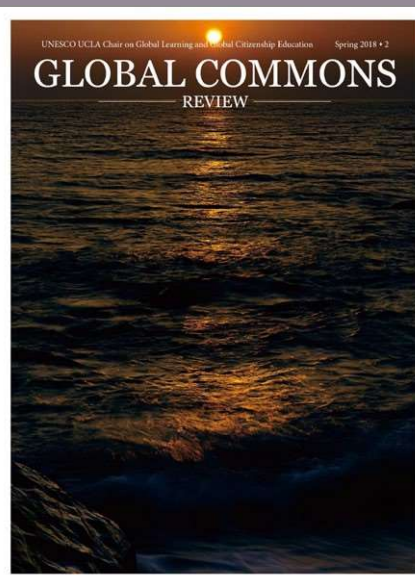
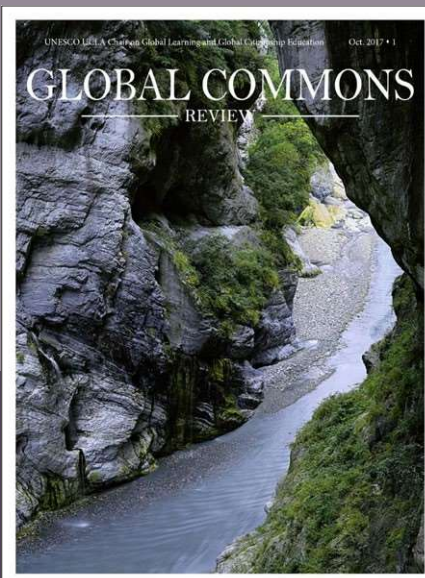
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