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Revisiting The Chinese Learner
Changing Contexts, Changing Education

Edited by
Carol K.K. Chan & Nirmala Rao

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This book, which extends pioneering work on Chinese learners in two previous volumes, examines teaching and learning in Chinese societies and advances understanding of ‘the Chinese learner’ in changing global contexts. Given the burgeoning research in this area, pedagogical shifts from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction to knowledge creation, wide-ranging social, economic and technological advances, and changes in educational policy, Revisiting the Chinese Learner is a timely endeavor.

The book revisits the paradox of the Chinese learner against the background of these educational changes; considers how Chinese cultural beliefs and contemporary change influence learning; and examines how Chinese teachers and learners respond to new educational goals, interweaving new and old beliefs and practices. Contributors focus on both continuity and change in analyzing student learning, pedagogical practice, teacher learning and professional development in Chinese societies. Key emerging themes emphasize transcending dichotomies and transforming pedagogy in understanding and teaching Chinese learners. The book has implications for theories of learning, development and educational innovation and will therefore be of interest to scholars and educators around the world who are changing education in their changing contexts.

Carol K.K. Chan is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong. Her research areas include learning, cognition and instruction, computer-supported knowledge building and teacher communities for classroom innovation. She has published in leading journals in these areas and won international research awards on knowledge building conducted in Chinese classrooms. Dr Chan has received Outstanding Teaching Awards from both her Faculty and University. She is currently Co-Director of a Strategic Research Theme on Sciences of Learning at The University of Hong Kong.

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In movements of educational reform across the world, educators are forging new roles, identities and relationships. Leadership is of course vital, but needs to be rooted in a capacity for learning. This volume responds to some of the tensions and paradoxes typically associated with educational reform, presenting a critical discourse on teachers as learners. Contributing authors highlight a range of culturally related challenges that teachers should not face in isolation.

Sustainable teachers’ learning ideally requires a collective engagement to turn challenges into opportunities in the quest for meaningful professional development. This book offers a vision of a new relationship among educational workers as a joint force of learners in a cross-boundary endeavour aimed at a renewed moral commitment to education.

Ora KWO is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. As a university academic who has been involved in teacher education for three decades, she specializes in research on professional development and on the processes of learning to teach. In 1997 she was awarded a University Teaching Fellowship by the University of Hong Kong in recognition of her excellence in teaching. Since then, her research interests have extended to the quality of teaching and learning in higher education, and to the building of learning communities. In 1999-2000 she held a Universitas 21 Fellowship at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Since 2001, she has been an Honorary Professor at Hangzhou Normal University in China, where she initiated the building of a learning community under the theme, “Teachers and Teacher Educators in Action Learning” (TATEAL).

Cover: Photographed by Ora Kwo in Bois de Vincennes, Paris. The image of teachers as learners can be visually presented as a form of vital energy, like that coming from the budding and shooting of new leaves in the spring. The critical discourse presented in this book can be linked to an old Chinese expression in recognition of a long-term perspective for commitment to education: “It takes ten years for growing trees, but a hundred years for growing people.” [十年樹木，百年樹人] 出自《管子·權修》:“一年之計，莫如樹穀；十年之計，莫如樹木，終身之計，莫如樹人”
How are students in Asia and the Pacific taught to be effective citizens? Following two successful volumes previously published in this series, Citizenship Education in Asia and the Pacific: Concepts and Issues and Citizenship Curriculum in Asia and the Pacific, this volume focuses on citizenship pedagogies that are promoted by governments in the region, advocated by scholars, and adapted in the schools and classrooms where citizenship education takes place every day. Thirteen case studies from diverse societies in Asia and the Pacific highlight the ways in which teachers and students think about, experience or plan for citizenship teaching and learning. Different methods – vignettes, student surveys, case studies and literature reviews – are used to portray these experiences, from both macro- and micro-analytic perspectives. The wide array of case studies provides rich information and insights into the realities and possibilities of pedagogies for citizenship across the region.

What we discover from this volume is as diverse and complex as the region itself. Conservative teacher-dominated pedagogies are common in many places, but more progressive pedagogies can also be found. In some places teachers struggle to implement new methods, while in others, students seem to be more radical than their teachers in seeking more engaging pedagogies. Many cases highlight also the pressures of examination cultures that influence teachers' choices of and students' preferences for particular pedagogical approaches. From a comparative perspective, the volume shows how pedagogical approaches from other contexts are interpreted locally, and how government directives are adapted in classrooms. It describes how integrated and hybrid pedagogical approaches evolve when teachers in the region struggle to respond to national, global and person-oriented approaches to citizenship education. As curriculum gate-keepers, some teachers in these case studies seek an appropriate instructional space by judiciously choosing pedagogies to suit their own conceptions of citizenship education. For other teachers there are more limited choices, because of strong societal mandates, perceived community expectations, or simply because of a lack of skills to teach in any other way.

Collectively these chapters constitute a remarkable study of the delivery of citizenship education across the region and of the variety of pedagogies that influence the lives of teachers and students in this context.

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